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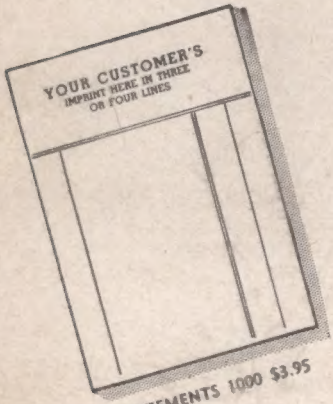

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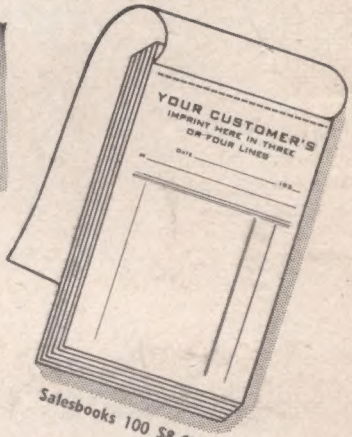

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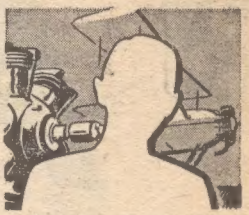

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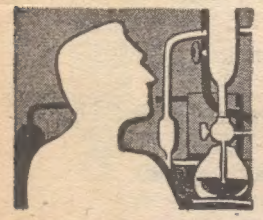

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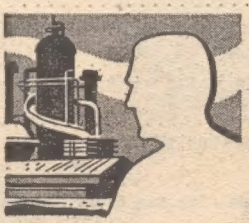

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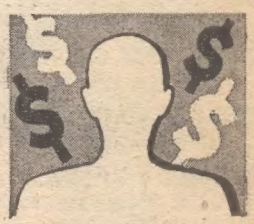

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Adventure

MAGAZINE

Registered U. S. Patent Office

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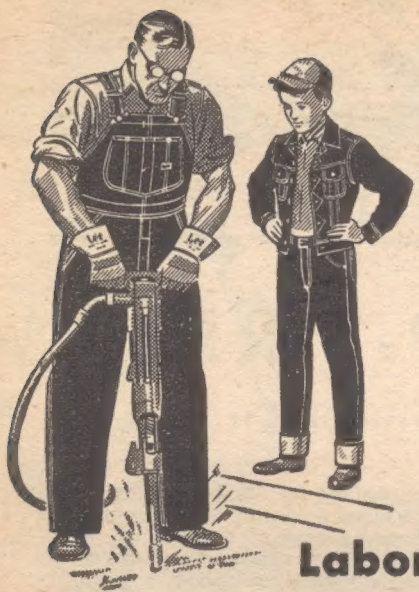

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THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

NOW and then a brand in the *Camp-fire* flares a little brighter than the rest. Sometimes the warmth is friendly—sometimes the glare is cruel. It's never nice to find you've forgotten a friend, particularly when the friend remembers.

A short while ago we heard from *Adventurer* F. S. Webster, who wears the title proudly. Mr. Webster wrote from Seattle, Washington, asking us to bring up to date our identification service file on him—and though the fault in no way lies with the present publishers of *Adventure,* it was with a sense of betrayal that we wrote to him that the service had been discontinued.

We did ask him, however, to send us further details, and are now happy to be able to inform Mr. Webster that his card is once more valid and in good standing. Mr. Webster's letter follows and is, we believe, self-explanatory:

The identification service was inaugurated by *Adventure* all of forty years ago. At first cards were used. The writer secured one of the cards shortly after, and was given a high number, which would indicate the idea was well received. Later metal plates were substituted, as it was found the cards deteriorated quickly in certain climates. The metal plate could be had for 25¢. The writer sent for one promptly and received number—.

Space was set aside each month for discussion on the many advantages of carrying such an identification. If I remember correctly quite a few *Adventurers* were identified by reason of the plates, who might otherwise have been listed as disappeared. A study of the old files should give you full details. The plates were available as late as 1926, to my knowledge.

I am attaching the first card issued to me. Notice is given in eleven languages to notify *Adventure* in case of accident or death, and the magazine passed this information along to the address furnished by the holder of the identification. The writer was engaged in special investigation work for many years, where it was sometimes dangerous to carry any identification whatsoever—the metal plate took care of proper identification without giving out further information and possession of the plate could quickly be explained by referring to a copy of the magazine which always carried items concerning same.

The writer believes this service would prove popular. No doubt there are thousands of readers who hold these metal plates in the belief that they are still a valid means of identification.

WE HAVE deleted Mr. Webster's identification number from the above, since with the re-activation of his number, this once again becomes confidential information in our files. We are also anxious to hear from other card-holders, with an eye to resuming as many of these records as our present facilities permit—and possibly reviving the service, if enough of our readers would like it.

Certainly the various uses to which this service was put by *Adventurers* around the world should make for fine reminiscence around the blaze. We are grateful to Mr. Webster for keeping us in mind these many years, and for reintroducing to these pages a topic close to the heart of—*Adventure.*

ALEXANDER WALLACE, whose ageless story of Siam heads this issue, needs little introduction to readers of *Ad-*

(Continued on page 8)

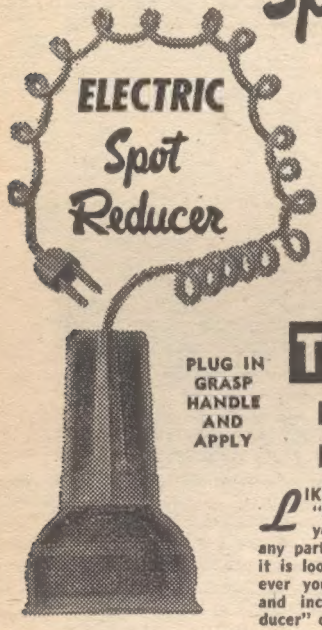
Reducing Specialist Says:

LOSE WEIGHT Where It Shows Most REDUCE MOST ANY PART OF THE BODY WITH

UNDERWRITERS LABORATORY APPROVED

Spot Reducer

Relaxing • Soothing Penetrating Massage



PLUG IN GRASP HANDLE AND APPLY

FOR GREATEST BENEFIT IN REDUCING by massage use Spot REDUCER with or without electricity—Also used as an aid in the relief of pains for which massage is indicated.

TAKE OFF EXCESS WEIGHT!

Don't Stay FAT—You Can LOSE POUNDS and INCHES SAFELY Without Risking HEALTH

LIKE a magic wand, the "Spot Reducer" obeys your every wish. Most any part of your body where it is loose and flabby, wherever you have extra weight and inches, the "Spot Reducer" can aid you in acquiring a youthful, slender and graceful figure. The beauty of this scientifically designed Reducer is that the method is so simple and easy, the results quick, sure and harmless. No exercise or strict diets. No steambaths, drugs or laxatives.

With the SPOT REDUCER you can now enjoy the benefits of RELAXING, SOOTHING massage in the privacy of your own home! Simple to use—just plug in, grasp handle and apply over most any part of the body—stomach, hips, chest, neck, thighs, arms, buttocks, etc. The relaxing, soothing massage breaks down FATTY TISSUES, tones the muscles and flesh, and the increased awakened blood circulation carries away waste fat—helps you regain and keep a firmer and more GRACEFUL FIGURE!

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When you use the Spot Reducer, it's almost like having your own private masseur at home. It's fun reducing this way! It not only helps you reduce and keep slim—but also aids in the relief of those types of aches and pains—and tired nerves that can be helped by massage! The Spot Reducer is handsomely made of light weight aluminum and rubber and truly a beautiful invention you will be thankful you own. AC 110 volts. Underwriters laboratory approved.

Take pounds off—keep slim and trim with Spot Reducer! Remarkable new invention which uses one of the most effective reducing methods employed by masseurs and turkish baths—MASSAGE!

MAIL THIS 10 DAY FREE TRIAL COUPON NOW!

TRY THE SPOT REDUCER 10 DAYS FREE IN YOUR OWN HOME!

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SENT ON APPROVAL—MAIL COUPON NOW!

SPOT REDUCER CO., Dept. E-674

1025 Broad St., Newark, New Jersey

Please send me the Spot Reducer for 10 days trial period. I enclose $1. Upon arrival I will pay postman only $8.95 plus postage and handling. If not delighted I may return SPOT REDUCER within 10 days for prompt refund of full purchase price.

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MUSCULAR ACHES:

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ORDER IT TODAY!

(Continued from page 6)

venture. Born in Victoria, B. C. at the turn of the century, he has spent the major portion of his life adventuring the seven seas—and some as yet uncharted. But the richness and warmth of the experiences which led to the writing of "Jungle-Wallah" —the strange off-spring of a tramp of the seas, for the kiss of whose coming lonely men died—deserves mention.

We'll leave it to Mr. Wallace to introduce you to the lady—*Cabo Delgado,* who lifted many a lonely exile up to heaven—or left "her passing wake in his heart, like a knife!"

After the war, when I had passed my Board of Trade Examinations for second mate, I signed on a vessel which was later sold to the *Companhia de Mocambique,* and, as strange as it may seem, if I am to tell you how I came to write "Jungle-Wallah," I'll have to begin by telling you something about that ship.

Lourenco Marques, Portuguese East Africa, was her home port, and the Portuguese rechristened her *Cabo Delgado.* She was just a rusty, cranky old lady whose new owners doled out paint as if it were liquid gold. But she could go where her betters could not follow. From Lourenco Marques to the Luhahi River, wherever there was a tin roof for the sun to gleam on, wherever there was an estuary with enough water to float her, she traded. Her six cabins were usually occupied by passengers, men and women of every nationality and from every walk of life—missionaries, salesmen, traders, engineers, doctors colonial officials, among the last I remember one or two who have since written their names large upon the map of Africa. They came and went, told their stories in the *Cabo Delgado's* creaking saloon, and left behind them the strong flavor of the Dark Continent. And much of what I have written is the recollection of just such table-talk.

Lousy, unkempt, an eyesore to a good seaman the *Cabo Delgado* certainly was, but for all her faults I'll swear that she was one of the best loved ships afloat. Whenever her tiny plume of smoke was sighted from some isolated headland, or from behind a screen of coco-palms, eyes fastened upon it and speculation brooded upon it until she slid over the edge of the world, a dingy speck upon the vast blue of the Indian Ocean. To the folk who lived in those lost places of the earth she was *the* Steamer, a symbol, a link with home, the loveliest lady of the seas. Between the kiss of her coming and the blow of her going there was often the span of six months. She could lift a lonely exile up to heaven, or she could leave her passing wake in his heart, like a knife.

And you may take that literally. Once we were standing in to an isolated factory which must remain unnamed. The young trader had done his three-year spell, and we had his relief aboard. But there was a bad anchorage in that estuary, with the surf breaking feather-white over a bar. The Old Man didn't like the smell of the weather. He decided to make another call first, and we stood out to sea again. When we came back to drop anchor around the headland—just about forty hours later—it was to find the young fellow stretched out on the floor of his bungalow, a bullet in his brain.

There was a pitiful little note. He'd been counting the hours. He thought that there was no relief for him this trip. He was the Forgotten Man. He just couldn't face another six months of exile.

You may wonder at that. I wondered at it, but I don't think I understood how a thing like that could happen until—

After I had secured my master's certificate and had seen a good deal more of the world. I had returned to Canada and was sailing out of Vancouver to the Orient when I took sick and was put ashore in Bangkok. They left me there to die, but it wasn't my time to do that just then.

During convalescence I took a shore job. Oh, no—I never was a jungle-wallah. Nothing like that for me! I was skipper of a houseboat which was owned by a missionary society, and I ran her up and down the MePing for a season. She was a queer craft, specially built for the job. She was motor-driven, with propellers in a tunnel which enabled her to draw less than two feet of water. She could go over a flooded rice-field, and she was to the jungle-wallahs up on the lonely creeks what the *Cabo Delgado* was to the traders and missionaries along the coast of Mozambique.

"It's the syme the 'ole world over—" the jungle-wallahs used to sing as we glided up and down the weird river, or lay moored for the night near some forgotten village, with up-curving finials, and with the sun touching a pagoda, sinuous, aspiring, a golden flame among the fig trees.

As for the splendid young men who went into the forests to "girdle" the teak, they will always have my deepest sympathy. If there's a tougher grind than the "treadmill" as they call the process of girdling, I'd like to know about it. And I owe them a debt of gratitude also; for more than one yarn I've published since I swallowed the anchor and turned scribe has sprung from the yarns they told—some of them the most unbelievable a man ever heard, others only too well authenticated by the nostalgic, fever-haunted ravings of a man coming out of the *pah-dum,* perhaps to die.

A NOTE from Verne Athanas, whose work has appeared in most major publications, including *Adventure,* in the past,

(Continued on page 110)

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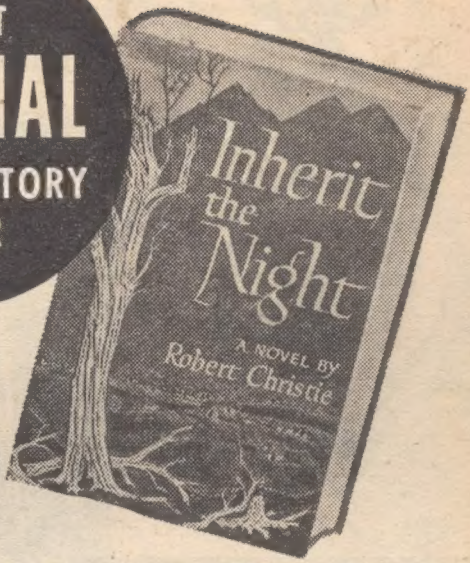

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But what people didn't know was that father and son hated—detested—one another.

For a time the animosity between father and son, though nearly overpowering, was kept under control. But when the older man brought young, spirited Helen into their home, the house could not contain the passions her arrival aroused, and father and son became locked in deadly combat.

This is a story of tense power and drama, a thorough, fascinating examination into the soul of a son struggling against the deadly barrier of his father's power.

OR

INHERIT THE NIGHT by Robert Christie
(Published at $3.00)

It was sundown when Kurt Werden reached the tiny pueblo high in the Andes. He carried a heavy pistol and an old newspaper clipping which read, ENEMY LEADER DIES IN BESIEGED CITY. He demanded an impossible thing—to be taken to San Cobar.

The villagers had heard of San Cobar. The old legends said that it was a place of great wealth. But it lay beyond the mountains from which no man had returned alive. True, El Borracho, the drunken trader, had returned from his mysterious wanderings with rich ornaments, but he was now far gone in drink.

The stranger showed El Borracho more gold than he had ever seen, enough to make him forget the terrible mountain gales, the yawning crevasses.

What happened beyond the mountains is an unforgettable story—the story of an arch criminal alone among a strange people who did not know the meaning of suspicion, of fear, of hatred, of death, but who were to learn.

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JUNGLE-WALLAH

By

ALEXANDER WALLACE

THE name of the town was Nam Pok. There were jade-green rice-fields and, beyond these, distant, rugged mountains, standing out boldly against an opal sky. The Meping wound its yellow way between flat sandbanks. Attap-roofed houses, with curved and pointed gables, stood on stilts in the water. Sampans rocked in the wake of a small stern-wheeler on its way down to Bangkok, and big, bamboo wheels, as thin as cobweb, churned the water up out of the river into the *klangs* that fed the rice fields.

On the opposite side of the river the red-tiled roofs of the London and Bangkok Teak Company's station showed above the green of the bamboos which leaned gracefully over the bank, and the fact that no

one had come across to the little railway station to meet him made Lee Brixton think again that there was just one snag about his new job—he would be under the notorious Phillip Prichard, the company's district manager. All the way up the Meping, from Raheng to Kiang Mai, Prichard was known as a man of force and character; or, if the opinion of the jungle-wallahs who had worked under him for a season or two were preferred, a man without any character at all, but certainly a man of force.

At every station on his way up-country Lee wondered at it. He believed that a man man. Much of it he had dismissed as the mere griping of disgruntled, homesick exiles. But all spoke bitterly of the acidity of Prichard's pen, of his ability to write a "stinker" and, in Lee's opinion, that was the most serious charge against the man—for there was nothing more calculated to get an up-country man down than one of those semi-official chits which conveyed dissatisfaction with a man's work. He had the case of young Vickers in mind.

Prichard, according to report, had disliked Vickers personally as well as being dissatisfied with his work, and he had sent the youngster a series of "stinkers". The result: Vickers, in a fit of despondency, had blown out his brains up on the lonely Me Lao.

The uninitiated might wonder at that. Lee wondered at it. He believed that a man carved out his own destiny, and that when things went wrong it was due to some flaw in the man's character, not to the workings of a blind and inscrutable fate, nor to any other preordained necessity. It was natural for him to think so. His folks had wrested a hard living from the soil of North Dakota; he had taught himself to read and write, worked his way through university, and he had come out on top in spite of the odds against him.

Yet he had no illusions about this new job of his. During the two years he had spent in the company's sawmill at Pak-nam-po he had seen many teak-wallahs pass up and down the river. A few, like Vickers, were dead now, some worse than dead—fever-hounded, gin-soaked wrecks who came drifting down the river and made a man aware of the unspeakable things of loneliness and isolation, of the panic and the doom of youth in the teak forests of Siam.

At Pak-nam-po four senior men had turned down the offer of Prichard's district, and promotion. But not Lee Brixton. A good showing in the *pah-dum*, the black forest, as the Siamese called it, was the open sesame to a manager's bungalow. And Lee meant to move into one of them, even if he had to elbow a half-dozen men like Prichard out.

HE LOOKED equal to it. He was golden-brown, lusty and hard with strong-cut, definite features and no lines at all. Leaving his baggage at the station, he swung through the town with the effortless ease that comes of perfect muscular co-ordination. Brown-skinned peasants were moving about in mushroom-shaped hats and with huge baskets of paddy balanced on their necks. A yellow-robed priest sat in the shade of an areca palm, hunkered over his begging-bowl. Burmans, in gay silk headcloths and *panungs*, paused to stare at him, but the ubiquitous Chinaman went about his business without a glance to right or left. The setting sun picked out the gilded spire of a pagoda across the river, and from behind the crumbling walls of the *wat* a gong struck the hour.

For a silver *tikel* an old, Karen woman paddled him across the river to the company's landing. A dapper, little Siamese, in a blue *panung* and white coat, came down the pontoon gangway to meet him. He was as brown as burnt senna, and his white teeth flashed in an engaging smile.

"Listen, boy," was his disconcerting greeting, "I tell you, I am your friend!" And a smile quirked the corners of Lee's mouth as he got a fleeting picture of the man who had taught the houseboy his English.

"My name is Bua Deng. Listen, I tell you—"

"Well, all right, Deng." Lee grinned; then, much to the other's astonishment, he switched to good Siamese, directing Deng to send over for his bags immediately.

Behind the bamboos and palms, Prichard's bungalow was set back in a shaded compound. Back of it, at some distance, there was another fenced compound and sheds, and the breeze from that direction was very strong with the smell of elephants. The company's house flag was being hauled

down by a Karen watchman in khaki uniform as Deng escorted Lee across the compound to the main building. Though called a bungalow, the building was two-storeyed, the office and strong-room on the ground floor, the living quarters above.

Passing abruptly from the glare of the open compound into the semidark of the inner office, Lee stood blinking in the doorway. A fan squeaked on unoiled hinges above his head, and wafted the pungent odor of incense around the barely furnished room. He could see the shadowy outline of a man behind the desk which stood near the window with closed jalousies—and, standing there with the light behind him, while the man at the desk subjected him to careful scrutiny, he had the distinct feeling that he was not welcome.

Again he felt the faint stirring of the resentment he had first experienced upon his arrival at Nam Pok.

Then a basket-chair creaked. A man, big, sandy-colored and square, with arms and neck like a hairy oak, came from behind the desk, and he was curtly polite. After a brief exchange of greetings, he moved back behind his desk, pulled the cord of the jalousies, and sat down in a flood of light to frown over what Lee guessed was his file, sent up from headquarters in advance.

"Where did you learn to speak Siamese?" he asked suddenly.

"At the company's sawmill in Pak-nampo, sir. I sweated it out at nights with a young Siamese who wanted to improve his English."

"Hm-m, the studious type, eh?" There was a long silence, then: "I see that you've only done one season's girdling, and that not alone. "I tell you, quite frankly, boy, I'd prefer a man with more actual experience in the *pah-dum*. Are they short of men down there?"

"No, sir. Four senior men turned the job down before they got around to me."

"Ah!" Prichard's head came up with a jerk. "The Vickers story, I suppose?"

"Possibly," said Lee, and lapsed into cautious silence. He was inclined to believe that the worst he'd heard about Prichard was not far from the truth. The man's mouth was loose, shaped to abuse, and his eyes held the light with a mocking, cynical gleam.

Prichard said, "Vickers was like a lot of youngsters they send out here—the old school tie, and all that sort of rot. They seem to think that a jungle-wallah's job is to ride through a forest, clad in spotless jodhpurs, snapping out orders and acknowledging salaams. Now, if you've got any such fancy notions, Brixton, you'd better go back where you came from. Make up your mind now."

"I did that before I took on the job, sir."

"And yet you haven't been in the forest alone. What makes you think you can take it any better than Vickers?"

"I'm not thin-skinned, sir."

"No—no, Americans seldom give that impression. Well, the fact that you devoted your spare time to the study of Siamese, and not to tennis, cricket and women, is a strong point in your favor." His smile became almost genial. "It's not often the firm employs Americans, Brixton," he finished in a tone that invited confidences.

Lee responded quickly. "My sister married in England. Mr. Chambers is my brother-in-law, and he wrote—"

"Chambers of the London office! Well, well—I see!" Prichard interposed with a smile that brought the blood into Lee's cheeks.

He asked sharply, "What d'you see?"

"Nothing, nothing, disparaging, Brixton. As I say, the firm does not employ Americans as a rule, and I was just curious to know you got in. Now, about your job. Listen, I tell you, boy, Nam Lao is a rugged concession—not large, but one of the worst in the country. You'll take over where Vickers left off, and that means that you've got to make up for lost time. I can only give you six elephants, but I want every log in your drag extracted and rafted before the Nam Lao dries up. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. I hope to have you started on your way up-country in a couple of days. Meanwhile, make yourself comfortable. I'll see you later this evening." He struck a gong on his desk, and Bua Deng materialized at the door.

LEE followed the boy up a steep staircase, and into a small bedroom, lighted by a single kerosene lamp. A screen door opened onto a broad veranda, and a wall of

hibiscus in full bloom, immediately below, scented the air. Lee had just finished washing when two native boys came in with his bags, followed by a lean, narrow-faced Britisher, whose black hair looked as if it had been lacquered to keep it in place. He had a lopsided grin, and he advanced with quick, jerky steps, his hand outstretched.

"I'm Bradley, assistant to the Bull o' the Woods in these parts," he introduced himself. "Sorry I couldn't get over to meet you. But all our chaps are up on their respective drags. There're just the two of us here, and the old boy was a bit liverish this morning. How about a sundowner?"

"Fine!"

Bua Deng brought in the drinks. "Welcome to Nam Pok!" said Bradley, and drained his glass in a gulp. "How did you get along with Prichard?" he asked as soon as he had caught his breath.

"So far so good."

"Bit of a martinet, but the firm thinks no end of him. Fine chap, when you get to know him really. He's had this station for five years."

"Five years!" Lee echoed with a slight frown. "It's a wonder the company hasn't given him a bigger station."

Bradley sat on the cot, stretched out long legs, and contemplated his carefully pipe-clayed shoes: then: "He's had offers, but he prefers to save his money. Not many Europeans up here, y'know. No extravagant entertaining, and all that sort of thing. As I've said, he's a bit of a stickler, likes detailed maps sent in with the fortnightly reports. Map making was Vickers' strong point—about all he did have, poor devil! He made a good map of your drag. It's in Prichard's office somewhere. Look it up. It might help."

"Thanks, I'll do that."

"Glad to help any way I can." His grin slid up to his left ear. "By the way, we dress for dinner here. Eight o'clock in the old boy's quarters. See you then." He rose with a quick, nervous movement, and went out.

There was one thing more wrong at the Nam Pok Station, Lee discovered that night. Both Prichard and Bradley could drink enough to put two ordinary men under the table. As the evening progressed Prichard's mouth became more repulsive, physically and verbally. Bradley's lopsided grin became fixed as if by paralysis, and Lee found himself the butt of a good deal of sly innuendo. By ten o'clock the conversation had become unpleasantly personal. Now, he was no longer "Brixton," or "Boy," but, "Our distinguished guest with London connections." And, feeling his liquor and his gorge rise to it, he decided to retreat to his room while the going was still good.

"Bradley and I will be going across to town in the morning," Prichard told him as he stood up. "Got to hire a few mahouts for you. Meanwhile, Deng will show you around the station. Then you'll have something to write home about. And don't forget to commend us to your brother-in-law, eh?"

A muscle in Lee's jaw tightened, and he left them with a curt: "Good night."

Prichard and Bradley had left for the town before Deng called him on the following morning. They did not show up for tiffin and, after the noon siesta, Lee went down to the office to look for the map Bradley had mentioned. He was on all fours, sorting through a stack of old records he'd found in a packing case, when Prichard walked in on him.

The latter hauled up with a throaty grunt as he caught sight of Lee. "What the devil are you snooping around for now?"

A swift flame of anger flared in Lee. He got slowly to his feet, giving himself time to regain his composure.

Then he answered evenly, "I'm looking for a map. Mr. Bradley said it was in Vickers' file—"

"Vickers' file!" Prichard's face was suddenly charged with blood. He had been drinking, the way he swayed forward told Lee that, and his mouth was ugly. "By heaven, I'll teach you!" he swore. Then his teeth came together with a sharp click, and he launched a punch at Lee's head.

Lee had seen it coming, and he faded back fast. Even so, the power of the blow drove him against the wall with his head ringing like a bell. He sidestepped Prichard's next punch, and did not retaliate. A brawl with his manager wasn't going to do him any good.

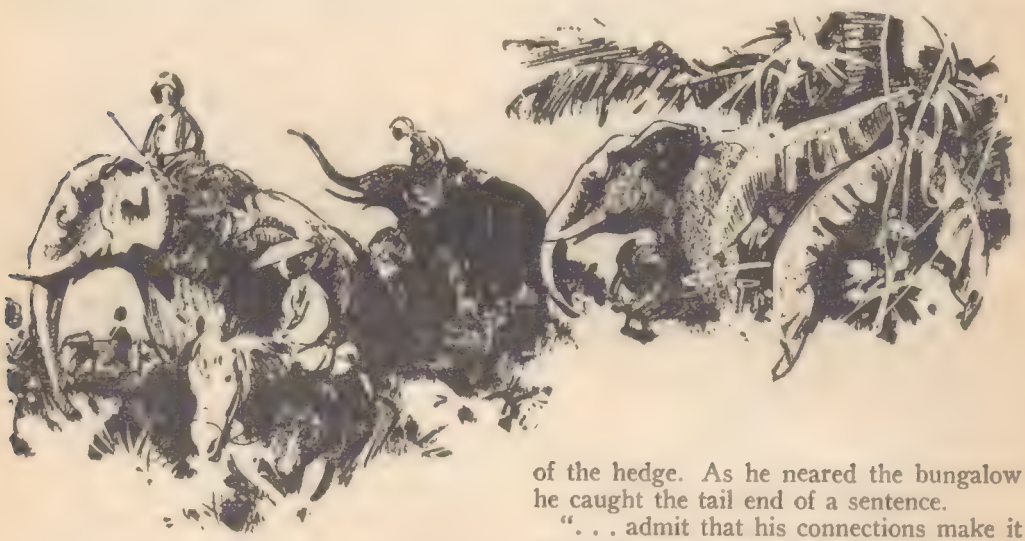
He backed away with a placating gesture, and said, "You've got me wrong, sir! Nobody sent me to—"

Prichard did not give him time to fin-

ish. One corner of his mouth was jerking spastically, and his big, hairy fists drove Lee into a corner. He came boring in, grunting with exertion, punching wildly. But he was a powerful man, and dangerous in close fighting. Finally, he hammered Lee's guard down, and got home with a blow that split Lee's lip.

With the salt taste of blood in his mouth, Lee decided that Prichard was too dangerous to play with, and he set him back on his heels with a hard left and right.

Prichard paused to shake his head, mouthing a string of filthy epithets at the same time; then he came roaring at Lee.



Thoroughly roused now, Lee stepped out of the corner to meet him head on, his fists working like pistons. Prichard went down to his hands and knees under a barrage of blows. He arched his back in an attempt to regain his feet, then groaned and went all the way down.

Rubbing his knuckles, Lee looked around to see Bradley standing in the doorway, the muscles of his long face flaccid. His eyes met Lee's in a wide, dark stare.

He headed straight out of the compound and followed the road which ran along the river bank, walking swiftly to work himself into a more tranquil frame of mind before he faced Prichard again. He didn't know what to expect now, and he told himself that he must have been crazy to let a thing like this happen. The thought uppermost in his mind was that Prichard might send him back to Pak-nam-po, and that would be the end of Lee Brixton's career as a jungle-wallah. He kept going until dusk and the mosquitoes drove him back to the station.

He crossed the compound, his rubber-soled shoes making no sound. It was dark under the wall of hibiscus, and a pair of white dinner-jackets showed against the blackness. A cigarette was snapped out by unseen fingers. It described an arc, and was crushed underfoot as the pair turned about and walked toward the bungalow.

Thinking that it were best to avoid Prichard until morning, Lee chose the other side of the hedge. As he neared the bungalow he caught the tail end of a sentence.

". . . admit that his connections make it look that way, Bradley."

Then Bradley's voice: "It doesn't follow, old chap. I did tell him there was a map, y'know. That's what he was looking for, I think."

"It's possible, of course. But listen, I tell you, Bradley, we'd better call it off, for this season at any rate."

"No—no we can't do that! It would start no end of trouble—these damned Orientals have a fine conception of squeeze—you know that! Besides, I doubt that he'll stick it. His lack of experience—"

With a muttered oath Lee quickened his pace, and gained the bungalow unseen. In his room he communed with himself for a time, blowing smoke rings up at the ceiling.

One thing was obvious, Prichard believed that he'd been sent out by the London office as an investigator of some kind.

From the conversation he'd overheard it was fairly obvious, too, that Prichard and Bradley were doing a little trading on the side; and, since private trading was interdicted by the company, it was not hard to understand Prichard's violent outbreak in the office.

Lee wondered if Vickers had run afoul of Prichard for the same reason, and he wished he knew more about his predecessor's background. Well, in spite of the edicts of the London Office, trading in silk, ivory, even opium, was no crime in the eyes of the burra-sahibs, the executives in Siam. He decided that he would have it out with Prichard in the morning, convince him that his only concern was to make good in the *pah-dum*, and to get into the big money himself.

BUA DENG woke him early on the following morning with a message that Prichard wanted to see him in the office as soon as possible. He dressed quickly and went down, expecting the worst. Prichard's face was oddly swollen, his greeting crisp and to the point.

"Just forget about what happened yesterday, Brixton. I had a bad day. Trouble getting you a crew, and too much whisky. You can take that as an apology."

"Glad to, sir!" was Lee's prompt response.

"Good! Now, I couldn't find a cook for you. I don't like to part with Bua Deng, but I'm sending him along with you. You're due to start right after breakfast. Fit?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Here's the map you were looking for. Look it over, and get Deng to pack your things. Now, a word of warning. See that all your logs are properly stamped. There's a Chinese company working the Me Lao several miles below your drag. They have the idea that any unstamped log is their property, so don't leave the stamping to your serang. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Another thing. Keep off the liquor. It's all right down here, but I tell you, boy, there's nothing that'll finish a man quicker in the *pah-dum*. That was the trouble with Vickers. He started drinking and left his work to his serang. Consequently his work fell behind, and to cover up he turned in a false report. I accepted it and, of course, the shortage wasn't discovered until his rafts got down to Pak-nam-po. Then there was hell to pay. Keep this in mind, Brixton, and remember the *pah-dum* can break a man, and it can make him. It's up to you now. Get on with it."

Two hours later Lee stepped out of the office into sunlight and commotion. The core of the excitement centered around a half-dozen elephants, standing near the compound gate, flapping their ears and wafting their trunks and tails to keep off the flies. On their backs the mahouts had just fitted howdahs made of teak wood, resting on canvas bolsters stuffed with fiber to prevent galling. Two oxcarts followed by a string of Karen coolies came up to join the caravan. The Karens had their *panungs* tucked up so high that they appeared to have nothing on, except the full bag of rice, as thick as an auto tire, which they wore around their waists.

Bradley came out followed by a couple of coolies, carrying the official specie-box which contained five thousand rupees to meet Lee's payroll and expenses for the season. It was made of half-inch teak, bound with iron, and it had a yard of chain attached to one of its metal handles.

"Keep it padlocked to your camp bed, old chap," Bradley told Lee as the coolies swung the box into one of the ox-carts. "And sleep with your revolver under your pillow. If you keep things running smoothly up there, I won't see you until the Christmas gathering. Till then, good luck!"

They shook hands, and Lee's *sais* brought up a wiry, little pony and held the stirrup for Lee to mount. As Lee swung into the saddle Bradley raised his hand. The mahouts shouted, and the elephants swung out of the gate and down to the river crossing, the trail crumbling to red dust under the pounding of their pads.

At two and a half miles per hour it was a long weary trek up to the junction of the Me Lao and the Meping, and it was a curse upon all jungle-wallahs that they must do their work in the wet season. Day after day Lee slogged through muddy rice-fields and scrub-jungle, seldom with a dry skin. There were many villages along the line of march, and they passed through them with pariah curs yapping at their heels, threatening to stampede the elephants. Then into the jun-

gle again, miles of it in deep morass, with the gongs slung above the bullocks shoulders making enough noise to scare off all the tigers in Siam.

Soon the country changed, but not the weather. Villages became few and far between. Savage hills, densely wooded, heaped themselves up into the most forbidding shapes. Between them and into them Lee led his little caravan, with the words of a song, popular among the company's juniors, running through his head:

It's the syme the 'ol world over—
Ain't it a ruddy shyme?
It's the rich wot tykes their pleshers,
An' the poor wot tykes the blyme!
See the burra-sahibs!
On green lawns they proudly sit,
While the wretched jungle-wallahs
Plod on through slime an' grit. . . .

At last they came to the village of Kiang Chi, the last shown on Vickers' map. The felling-station bungalow was only fifteen miles above the village. But it was too late to go on, and they camped within the crumbling, brick walls of an old *wat*—for the Lord Buddha extends his hospitality to all men equally, though it did strike Lee that his yellow-robed, shaven priests were keenly aware of worldly distinctions.

At any rate, he was permitted to sleep in the *vikarn*—in the very shadow of the old, bronze Buddha which smiled serenely through the patina of ages—while his servants made themselves as comfortable as possible in the *sala,* the open cloisters which surrounded the courtyard of the temple.

Early on the following morning he sent the caravan on ahead, while he made his duty call upon the Amphur, the headman and chief magistrate of the district. The old fellow's name was Chow Wongsa, and he was as lean as a wild dog, as yellow as a lemon, but very grave and dignified in his blue-silk *panung* and white stockings. For an hour Lee chatted with him and sipped tea flavored with tamarind. Then he rode on to join the caravan.

ABOVE the village there was a rice-plain and a lake. Many creeks, new-born and boisterous, spilled into it from the surrounding hills to swell the steady flow of the Me Lao, and Lee did not envy the man who had girdled the area; for that meant that every tree of suitable girth had to be ring-barked with a deep cut clean through to the heartwood so that, after the lapse of two years, the tree would be fit for felling and, greatly reduced in weight, floatable. And the teak, well named *tectona gradis,* grew up the steep walls of the valleys amid thickets of thorny bamboo and dense underbrush. Lee thought that the devil who'd done the girdling job must have scrambled up and down the hillsides like a squirrel on a treadmill.

The felling-station bungalow stood in an extensive clearing. It was the usual large, square floor four feet above the crawling earth, sheltered by a peaked, exactly square roof of corrugated iron, Vickers' godown was visible from the veranda, a black scar on the hillside, gouged to the depth of twenty feet by the great logs he'd sent crashing down to the water.

The felling-camp had a resident watchman and headman, a grizzled, old veteran of the forests who kept his mouth so full of betel that it looked as if he had a chronic gumboil. His name was Chone, and he was responsible for the dragging chains, hobbles, saws—all the tools used in the working of teak. He knew his job, and Lee had the camp organized, the process of *ton-taw,* as the Karens called the drag down to a floating stream, well started on the day after his arrival.

It was Lee's chief job to inspect the fellings at the stump, to see that the log was properly stamped and to show the headman the most economical way to trim and shoe it. He thought that a couple of tractors would do the job in half the time, but it was a constant pleasure to watch the elephants work, nevertheless.

The mahouts, their heads almost covered completely with cloth as a protection against the flies which hovered over each elephant in a black cloud, shouted their orders, and the huge beasts obeyed with a precision that would have turned a circus ring-master green with envy. The way they used their tusks to get a log away from the stump amazed Lee, and once they got it moving the intelligent beasts never allowed it to bog down in the mud. They put their foreheads to the butt, and kept the four or five ton log moving until it went sliding down

the godown into the fast-flowing nullah.

For two weeks things went very smoothly for Lee. As a houseboy Bua Deng was almost unbelievable, a very paragon among cooks—always smiling, always at hand to anticipate his master's needs, and sometimes Lee wondered what had prompted Prichard to part with him. Deng made the loneliness of the camp bearable, and with Chone, trustworthy and competent, to keep his Karens fit and on the job, Lee felt that he owed Prichard a good deal, in view of what had happened almost at their first meeting. He was confident that he would have his rafts on the way down to Paknam-po well in advance of the company's competitors.

And then everything started to go wrong.

He was contentedly smoking an after-breakfast cigarette one morning when Chone came running up the veranda steps, shouting, "Master, Master!" at the top of his voice. His tone told Lee that something serious had happened, and he jumped to his feet and went out onto the veranda.

"What is it, Chone?"

"Oh, Master, an evil thing has come to pass in the night!"

"Well?"

"Tusk-thieves, Master!"

Lee stood staring into the headman's brown, wrinkled face, a little slow to grasp the significance of his words. He had heard about tusk-thieves, and he had heard a lot of other yarns about elephants, too. That one of the intelligent beasts would stand by, chewing a ball of rice or a chunk of sugar cane, while someone deftly sawed off its tusks, was a yarn that wanted more than the testimony of words, he'd decided. But then, most natives had been mahouts at one time or another, or knew how to manage elephants, and there was consternation written all over Chone's face.

"Was no one on watch—where are the mahouts?" he demanded.

"They still sleep. Opium, Master."

"Opium—where did they get it, Chone?"

The headman shrugged. "Who knows, Master. Perhaps from the village. Perhaps a Chinese peddler crept into camp when I was not looking."

"Well, seeing is believing," muttered Lee. "Let's have a look, Chone." He led the way to the paddock at the back of the bungalow.

Chone's report was inaccurate only in that he had not mentioned the fact that *all* the elephants' tusks had been neatly sawn off an inch from the base!

"Lord, Lord!" breathed Lee. "Why didn't they make a thorough job of it—steal the elephants!"

"Sometimes they do so, Master," Chone told him.

The mahouts were stretched out on their sleeping mats under the black tarpaulin at the far end of the paddock. Chone shook and kicked them, but they were stupefied from the effects of the drug, and he could get no sense out of them. Lee walked back to the bungalow, his mind busy with the problem that confronted him.

THINGS might not be so bad as they appeared on the surface, he thought. The elephants were not useless—he could use drag-chains. But that meant that he would have to build drag-paths of green sleepers—miles of it! It would take time, but he could hire labor in the village, and with all the bullocks and ox-carts he could get his hands on, he might still get his logs out before the Ma Lao dried up.

He spent the forenoon with Chone and a couple of axe-men, lining up his drag-paths by a series of compass bearings. Then he had his pony saddled and set out for the village.

He arrived at the Amphur's house just after the noon siesta. Chow Wongsa met him with the conventional greeting: "Where are you going, Master?"

"I come for your blessing and your help, Uncle," Lee returned. "Thieves have stolen the tusks of my elephants."

"Ah, those dogs from the hills! They are great thieves. But I cannot catch them for you, my son. No, the fiends of the forest are in league with them!"

"I do not ask that, Uncle. I want only men and ox-carts to build roads. I will pay well."

"So!" A shrewd gleam came into the old man's eyes. "Enter my poor house, my son, and let us talk of this thing."

And talk they did for a long time, and about everything but the price of coolie labor. The sun was low before they got around to that—and then, after an hour's haggling, Lee was forced to agree to an

A woman, a Lao girl, had come to stand in the doorway. . . .

advance payment of three hundred *tikels*, payable by noon on the following day.

He rode out of the village with a wry twist to his mouth. He thought he understood what Bradley had had in mind when he'd mentioned the Oriental's "fine conception of squeeze." And he wondered if Prichard would burst a blood-vessel when he saw this season's expense account. Well, he'd get the logs out, even if he had to pay the price of it out of his own salary. Better to work for nothing than to fall down on the job.

The camp was in darkness when he rode in, but the watchman challenged him as he approached the bungalow. Not wanting to awaken his *sais*, he sent the man to stable his pony. He went straight to his room, and the first thing he saw as he opened the door was his cash box, still chained to the bed, but pried open and empty!

An instant later he was out on the veranda, roaring for Deng and Chone. Determined to discover the thief, he conducted the search of the Karens' huts and their scanty gear himself.

And then, finding nothing, he had each man brought to the bungalow for questioning. It was strange, but no one had heard a sound, or had seen anyone near the bun-

galow, and no man seemed to have been gone out of the sight of his fellows.

Contritely, Bua Deng confessed that he had left the bungalow to eat the evening meal with Chone.

"But I was not long away, Master. Just a small time—"

"Long enough!" Lee cut in bitterly; and then, as Deng hung his head and looked as if he were about to burst into tears, he added: "All right, Deng. It was not your job to look after it—I left no orders. That's all for tonight. Tell Chone to get the men quieted down."

Utterly worn out and completely baffled, Lee sat on his cot, staring at the empty box and cursing his own carelessness. There was a good deal more than the loss of a few thousand rupees involved. Now he could not live up to his bargain with the Amphur, and that could mean the finish for Lee Brixton.

He was back in Chow Wongsa's house an hour before noon. But the old man was adamant. It was three hundred *tikels* as agreed, or no coolies and no oxcarts. And no amount of argument could make him see it differently. Exasperated, and reckless in his desperation, Lee offered to sign a draft on the company for twice the sum, but the old man still shook his head.

"It is not that I would not help you, my son," he said gravely. "True, I would keep my bargain if you had the money. But since we made it, I have spoken with my people. They do not want to work in the Me Lao forest. They say there is a curse upon it."

"That is woman's talk, Uncle!"

"So?" The old man's smile was tolerant. "Was it woman's talk that killed the white Master Vickers, my son, Is it woman's talk that has brought all this trouble upon you?"

"Give me your young men and I will show you that it is, Uncle."

But Chow Wongsa's only answer was a shake of his head, which conveyed as plainly as words that the interview was over.

Lee rode back to camp, consumed by a cold, inarticulate anger. A strange sense of impotency seemed to press upon him from all sources, from the blood-red sunset, and from the darkening woods on the mountain slopes. He was out of his depth in this forest, up against imponderable, intangible things like native superstitions which he did not understand, and, therefore, was unable even to begin to handle with sense.

If he had a little more time—but the great, leathery leaves of the teak were changing color, he noted, the sun beating through them so that they looked like yellow cellophane. And the river was not foaming under the bridge as when he'd first crossed it, a sure sign that the rainy season was drawing to an inevitable close. As matters stood, there was only one thing left for him to do—write an urgent appeal to Prichard for help, otherwise every log in the drag might be destroyed by forest fires.

Wearily he dismounted in front of the bungalow, shouting for his *sais*. He left the pony standing and started up the steps, only to haul up with a stifled exclamation.

A WOMAN, a Lao girl, had come to stand in the doorway of the bungalow. She was dressed in her very best, and wore a silver *pasin* and silk scarf, and there was a dead-white gardenia in her shining, black hair. Her shapely, bare legs and shoulders gleamed in the black frame of the doorway. She stepped aside with an enigmatic smile as Lee came slowly up the steps, and he carried the scent of sweet ointment and flowers in his nostrils as he passed into the main room to confront a grinning Deng.

"Where did she come from?" Lee demanded with a scowl.

Deng's grin broadened. "Perhaps from the village, Master. I tell you, I am your friend. It is not good for you to think too much of trouble, so I tell her to stay."

"Send her back. Get rid of her at once," Lee ordered sharply, and went into his room.

Later, after the evening meal, he sat at the table for a long time, staring at a blank report sheet. Then, with tightly compressed lips, he wrote steadily for some time. It was an admission of defeat, and he read it over with his mouth awry. It was up to Prichard now, and if there were any delay even he would not be able to save the company's timber. He sealed the report in an envelope, and sent Chone down to the village with it, along with a note ot the Amphur requesting special delivery. Then, too tired to think, he flung himself on his cot fully dressed.

He awoke with a blinding headache. As soon as he set his feet on the floor he was

seized by a fit of ague, and knew at once that he was in for a dose of fever. He was not very worried. The company's doctor had told him that he was one of the lucky ones—something in his blood that reacted readily to the healing qualities of quinine, and therefore he'd know malaria only in its milder form, with recurrent temperatures, shivers and shakes.

He dosed himself with quinine and sat down to breakfast with his head buzzing. But he had no stomach for anything but liquid.

"Perhaps Master will take a little whisky in his coffee?" Deng suggested. "It will bring the sweat, and that is good."

"You brought some along, eh?"

"Yes, Master."

"Lord, you're like a mother to me! Sure, I'll take a little."

He was sipping his coffee when Chone appeared at the doorway, and at first sight of his dour face Lee became aware of a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"Well, what is it now, Chone?"

"The coolies say they will not work until Master has the money to pay them."

Lee experienced a profound sense of futility. Curses shaped themselves in his mind, then his features were immobilized by a taut expression. The Lord knew there wasn't much he could do with tuskless elephants in a forest tabooed by native superstition. But if his Karens thought that they were going to sit on their backsides until Prichard came up-river—well, there was something he could do about that!

"I'll talk to them, Chone," he said, and led the way out.

The Karens were gathered in the paddock, all talking at once. Shaky and a little unsteady on his feet Lee strode among them. Silence came as he looked sternly around the circle of brown faces that hemmed him in.

Firmly, and in good Siamese, he told them. "The Master Prichard will be here soon. He will pay you according to agreement. Meanwhile, there is no rice, no paddy for the man who does not work."

His edict was received with ominus silence. Then there was a shuffling of feet, a general movement that brought them pressing closer all around him. Slant eyes

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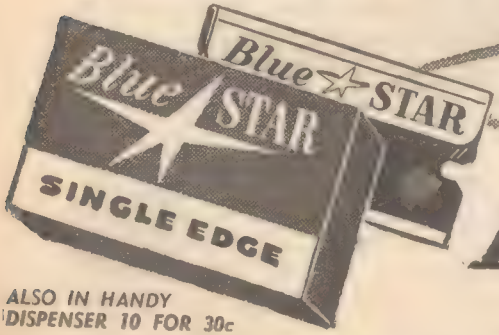

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squinted at him wickedly, muttered threats sounded on all sides, and he felt a cold, damp chill flat against his back. He was just one white man, alone and unarmed. All they had to do was stick one of their long *dahs* between his shoulders, and then help themselves to the rice. But nothing of what he felt showed on his face. His gaze did not waver, and the Karens could see no fear in him.

The clamor subsided, and then one of the mahouts spoke out, "Master, the elephants are angry because thieves have their tusks. We fear—"

"They have bigger bellies than you, and they will go to work the sooner," Lee cut in quickly.

The Karens saw something witty in the remark, and a ripple of laughter broke the tension. Lee was quick to take advantage of it.

"No rice for the man who does not work," he repeated. "As I say, so it will be."

With that he left them, and the Karens, all grinning now, stepped out of his path.

But in the days that followed he soon found out that it was one thing to drive coolies to work, and quite another thing to keep them at it. They went out into the forest, and they stayed there all day. But a couple of husky lumberjacks working with peavies could have extracted as many logs as they did in half the time.

Apart from the money trouble, there were two reasons for the slowdown. One was that the mahouts were getting opium from some mysterious source, and they sat their elephants with glazed eyes, half asleep most of the time. The other was Lee himself.

He had shaken off the fever, but he could not shake off the fits of depression, the hideous lassitude the disease had left in its wake. The job was licking him. He knew it, and the most damnable part of it was that there was nothing he could do about it until Prichard came up to straighten things out with the Amphur. It was enough to drive a man mad.

HE COULDN'T sleep at nights. Failure was a hard thing to sleep with, and it was worse for him because, at the back of his mind, there was the nagging idea that it was all due to some hitherto unsuspected flaw in his own makeup.

He felt self-betrayed.

One night, two weeks after his attack of fever, he went to bed early—he'd read every book he possessed through twice and, in the jungle, there was nothing else to do—and lay under his mosquito netting, tormented by the thought that in a matter of days, perhaps hours, he would have to face Prichard.

He supposed that he could take Prichard's abuse and like it, or he could quit before Prichard fired him on the spot. The prospect made him sweat, and unable to stand it any longer, he dressed and went out to pace the veranda.

Presently Deng came out with whisky and soda. He set his tray down on the cane table and looked up at Lee, his face a picture of commiseration.

"Master, drink a little," he urged. "Sleep will come then. I tell you—"

"All right. Now, clear out!" Lee told him irritably.

Deng's smile came and went. He salaamed and effaced himself as Lee filled his glass and drank.

The Karens were singing out in the paddock to the accompaniment of a reed instrument that made queer, bubbling sounds, and an eternal reiteration of trills. But between Lee and those brown men there were such barriers that he was more lonely than when alone. He sank into a fit of profound depression, and his loneliness became a thing of horror. He poured out his next drink neat.

He awoke with his own name ringing in his ears. He opened his eyes, got a fleeting glimpse of torn mosquito netting and his room in such disorder that it looked as if one of the elephants had walked through it.

He groaned and shut his eyes tightly against the glare of the sunlight flooding the room.

"Brixton!"

He sat up, and groaned again as his eyes came to focus on Phillip Prichard. The manager's bulk filled the doorway, and his glare seemed to push at Lee across the intervening space. He was furious, and he was brutally frank.

He started off with a string of stinging epithets, stamped around the room gradually simmering down to milder forms of

ıbuse, and finished with: "You're the lamnedest man they ever sent me, Brixton. A hell of a mess this is—and you, dead drunk before noon!"

Lee rallied his slightly befuddled wits and got to his feet. "Hardly touched the stuff before last night, sir," he said. "I was feeling low and—"

A grunt and a wave of Prichard's hand cut him short. "That's what they all say, Brixton. I've had a look around. Your logs are jammed in the lake. A hell of a mess you've made of things! I tell you, boy, the firm stands to lose half the felled teak in this drag!"

"I don't agree, sir, I've got drag-paths all lined up. If you can persuade the Amphur to give me the men I'll finish the job, so help me!"

Prichard's mouth stretched out into a thin line.

He regarded Lee steadily for a moment, then said softly, "You're through, Brixton. All through and finished. I'm sending you down to Pak-nam-po. I'll give you enough to pay expenses; if you think you've got anything more coming you can take it up with the firm when you get there."

At the oblique allusion to the money he couldn't account for, Lee's face became suffused with blood. He said, "From the fact that I got drunk last night, Mr. Prichard, it doesn't follow that my drinking is at the bottom of all the trouble here. And before

The pair came closer, jumping from log to log. . . .

you act on that assumption, I've got something to say."

"All right, say it, Brixton."

Then Lee gave him a clear account of all that had happened. Prichard listened without change of expression and when Lee stopped speaking, he asked: "Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Now listen, Brixton. The mail launch will be leaving the village tomorrow morning. You go down with it. My report will go down with you. Headquarters may believe you, but frankly, I tell you, boy, I don't!"

Lee's lips tightened, and a gleam of anger came into his eyes. But it was a transitory thing, a fleeting glimpse of the man he had once been before the fever and the jungle had sapped his will to resist. If Prichard didn't want to listen to explanatory circumstances, he couldn't make him. Anyhow, he couldn't explain failure. He doubted that there was an explanation outside of his own nature He couldn't explain away the fact that he'd left for the village without leaving strict orders with Deng to guard that damned cash-box. Well, thank heaven, he had enough cash in the bank to enable him to make good on that at least.

Prichard's body was braced as if in anticipation of a swift attack. But as he watched Lee's face narrowly, the tenseness of his poise left him, and his mouth slackened into a contemptous smile. He moved to the table, sat down and wrote out a pass, then counted out a half-dozen gold coins and stacked them on the paper.

"That'll keep you drunk all the way down to Pak-nam-po," he said rising. "I'm going up the drag to get things moving. The chap that brought my stuff in will take yours out, and you can sleep at the government resthouse. Now, pack up and get to hell out of here! I don't want to see you around when I get back. Understand?"

Lee merely nodded his head and, as Prichard turned to go, he dragged out his bags. Presently, Deng came in to help him.

"To see you go makes my stomach sick, Master," he said as they finished packing. "The food is not good in the village. I have put the *cheli* sandwiches you like, and whisky in the small bag."

"Thanks, thanks for everything," said Lee and pressed one of his gold coins into Deng's hand.

THE government resthouse stood on stilts in a small clearing a hundred yards back from the road that followed the Me Lao to the Burma border. It was for the convenience of travelers, and there was a small paddock and sheds for animals at the back.

Later, he made a lonely meal of Deng's sandwiches, and then went out to pace the veranda restlessly. The hillside fell sharply down to the rice plain. The lake, its outlet blocked by the log jam, had made a marsh of the fields. The road ran flat across bridgeless creeks and climbed into the foothills. Beyond, the mountains cut the skyline with sharp precision, their uniformity of curve and color broken by vast stretches of green, now aglow with the surpressed flame of the sunset—a forest of blood and gloom.

Darkness came swiftly to the mountains, and the night was broken by the temple gong, ceaselessly beating out the hours. And all around Lee there was the rhythmic beating of the forest. The bamboos creaked, quivering, trembling, incessantly moving in a light breeze, and queer monkey-whinings came out of the green mist.

The jungle was a living, breathing entity, he thought. Yet all the growing things in it were engaged in a terrible warfare, the struggle to get nearer to the light, the water, or the air. And suddenly there was awakened in him the dread of its brooding strength. The feeling was akin to panic. He felt the green walls closing in on him—he thought that he must live here forever, never escape, never see home again—encased in this endless struggle.

Too much imagination; he had to stop thinking, he told himself. He shivered in the chill of the night, conscious only of a crushing sense of defeat. He wasn't over that dose of fever yet, he thought. Hell with it! A man in his condition, and with what he had to face at Pak-nam-po, needed something to make him sleep and forget.

He went into the bungalow and came out with the whisky Deng had packed for him. With a wry mouth he settled in the cane chair, and proceeded to empty the bottle with deliberation. He was not a

drinking man, and it was not long before he was singing Kipling in a clear baritone:

". . . somewhere east of Suez
Where the best is like the worst
Where there ain't no Ten Commandments
An' a man—"

And then he saw her, swaying gracefully through a pool of moonlight, a gardenia gleaming white in her hair. He did not move or speak until she came up onto the veranda, and sat cross-legged before him, her perfect shoulders leaned back against the veranda rails.

Then he asked, "What is your name?"

"Komalayo, Master."

Lotus of the North, Lee translated, and thought that she was very well named, and that he must have been crazy when he'd sent her away on their first meeting.

"Who sent you here, Komalayo?"

"Bua Deng, Master."

"Well, well!" murmured Lee; then with a faintly bitter smile: "Have the villagers not told you that the forest is accursed hereabouts, Komalayo? There is only evil here."

Her dark eyes caught the light and flashed. "The evil is not in the forest, Master," she said gravely. "It is in the drink you drink of. At the bottom there is neither sleep nor forgetfulness, only despair and—death!"

An involuntary noise gurgled in Lee's throat, and his eyes widened with astonishment. A lecture on the evils of alcohol was not what he had anticipated at first sight of her. But, obviously, the girl was mission-educated, and he wondered vaguely if this were some new approach, a new technique in the saving of souls.

Then, struck by a sudden thought, he asked, "Perhaps, you knew the Master Vickers, Komalayo?"

Her answer came softly out of the darkness: "I knew him as well as a woman may know a man, Master."

"Ah!" Lee understood now. She was telling him that what had happened to Vickers could happen to him. And, by heaven, she was right! He had the skids under him all right. He had nothing to wonder at now. It took only a little experience, and no imagination at all, to understand what had happened to Vickers.

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He asked, "You loved your white man, Komalayo?"

The girl's eyes became moist and luminous. "Even so," she answered in a husky voice. "He was not so tall, not so strong as you are, Master. But he was brave and kind. I have not forgotten him."

Lee's expression was puzzled. "You came into the forest at night, just to tell me this, Komalayo?"

The girl rose and drew herself up to her full height, and again her eyes flashed in the dim light. She said with a throb of passion in her voice: "I came to tell you that there is no evil in the forest, Master. It is in the heart of Bua Deng, even as it was when he took me from my father's house to the arms of my white husband."

"Deng—Deng, here with Vickers!" Lee's hands gripped the arms of his chair so tightly that the cane groaned and snapped under the pressure.

The girl said, "I go now, Master. Remember what I say."

She left, but Lee was scarcely aware of it. Mentally, he was back at the Nam Pok station, reliving the hours he had spent there. And the shock of what he heard and saw in retrospect, with eye and ears sharpened by suspicion, left him cold sober. His mind flashed back over more recent events, tusk-thieves, opium, Bua Deng the paragon among houseboys and Prichard's man—good Lord, it could only mean that from the beginning Prichard had been hell-bent to break him!

He forced his mind to focus on this point. Sure, he was right! Send a man out into the jungle—make it tough for him by a series of cleverly arranged "mishaps." Break down his morale, and have a man like Deng handy to stick a whisky bottle under his nose. Then, when resistance is at the lowest ebb, bring on a girl, and if the victim didn't succumb, then he ought to be playing a harp among the angels.

Yet. There was more behind it all than Prichard's cussedness. Something much more important—

But coherent thinking was no longer possible for Lee. He was consumed by a bleak, inarticulate anger. He wanted five minutes alone with Prichard. Never had he wanted anything so much as he wanted that, and the driving urgency of it was such that he could not wait for daylight.

IN A matter of minutes he had his pony saddled and was on the road back to the felling-station. A half-hour's ride brought him to the shore of the lake, which was screened by tall reeds and thickets of bamboo. The overflow, resulting from the log jam, had washed out sections of the road, and he was thinking that the Amphur would be asking damages for that, when his eye was caught by the yellow light of a lantern showing through the screen of bamboo and reeds. It was out on the lake, near the point where the logs had jammed the outlet. Wondering what anyone would be doing out on the logs at this late hour, he dismounted and pushed his way through the thickets.

He saw two shadowy figures moving across the logs toward him. As they came nearer he recognized Prichard's bulky shape carrying the lantern, then Bua Deng with a long pike-pole. His first thought was that Prichard had come down to look over the jam—then, as the pair halted and crouched on the logs, the faint sound of scraping came to his ears, followed by the dull thud of blows.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he swore aloud. It was obvious to him that Prichard was scraping out the stamp he'd put on those logs, and substituting another for it. And it flashed into his mind instantly that the new mark would show two Chinese characters, the stamp of the Chu Sung Company.

As the pair came closer, jumping from one log to another, he crouched down among the reeds, a painful sense of having been taken overlaying his anger. So this was Prichard's game—selling the company's timber on the quiet, and covering the shortage by accusing his jungle-wallah of laziness, incompetence and drunkenness. He saw it all now. Vickers had not sent in a false report. But his rafts had been short by a few thousand dollars' worth of teak that he couldn't account for, and the poor devil had shot himself rather than face the disgrace. Yes, and at this moment Lee Brixton would he dead drunk in the rest-house, well on his way to becomming one of those wrecks he'd seen drifting through Pak-nam-po, but for the fact that Vickers had left his image in the heart of a Lao girl.

Words came drifting to his ears.

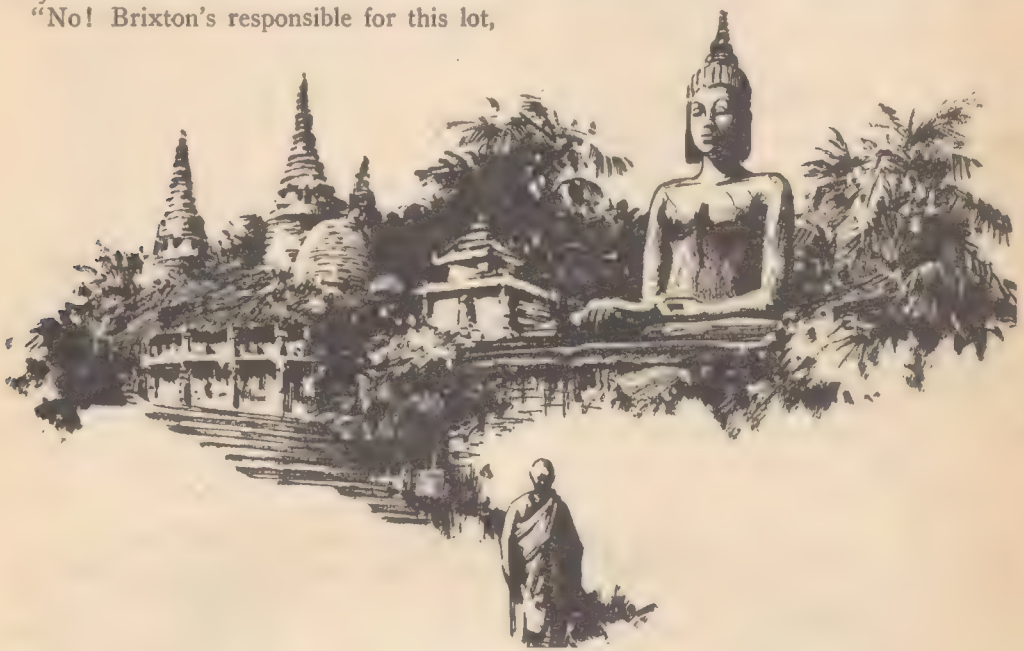
". . . does that make, Deng?"

"It is one hundred and ten, Master."

"The devil, you should have done more before I got here!"

"I could not, Master. He did not drink like the other, and there was no sleep in him. It was not safe to leave the bungalow often. But now you are here, it will be easy—"

"No! Brixton's responsible for this lot, and the shortage will show against his record. We'll break the jam first thing in the morning, and let 'em go. We've only got tonight, and I tell you, boy, out here in the open, we're taking more chances than—" He moved swiftly along the logs, leaving unintelligible words trailing behind him.



As light-footed as a cat Lee jumped out onto the logs. There was a slight underflow in the direction of the lake's blocked outlet. The logs were close-packed, almost as solid as a cribbed walk, but slippery underfoot. Lee was within a dozen feet of the pair before they became aware of it. Deng was a couple of paces behind Prichard, moving along a log with the pike-pole across his body, and it was he who first turned and saw Lee.

He let out a squeal of surprise—then, as quick as a flash, swung the pike-pole back and drove the spike at Lee's chest. Lee parried the thrust with a sweep of his left arm, stepped forward, and all but jolted Deng's head from his shoulders. The little Siamese fell flat on his face across the logs as Lee whirled around to face Prichard.

Prichard stood astride one log, his feet firmly planted on two others, his topee on the back of his head. His jacket and shirt were open at the front, showing a tangled mass of sandy hair. He carried the heavy, metal stamp in one hand, the lantern in the other, and in its light his face showed no fear, only unbelieving surprise.

Coolly he set the lantern down on the log he straddled, then straightened up and said, "It would seem that you're not the fool I took you for, Brixton. I don't know how you got onto us, but you have, and that's what counts. There's no need for a lot of talk, and I suggest that you come in with us. You've evidently got more brains than a jungle-wallah needs."

His composure, and the obvious fact that he expected his proposition to be accepted as promptly as it had been made, left Lee speechless. He could only shake his head.

"Don't be a fool!" Prichard told him with a short laugh. "Listen, boy, I tell you that you'll get nothing out of this firm. Like all the rest of us, you'll rot in the jungle for five or ten years. Then they'll send you home, fever-hounded, broken in health—with a pension that a coolie couldn't live on. See it our way, and you'll go home with enough to live on, decently at least.

Think about it, Brixton. Think of the years you'll have to live out alone in the jungle, and think of what you could do with that time in New York with money in your pocket. You can do anything with money, Brixton. Anything!"

A quizzical smile quirked the corners of Lee's mouth. He said, "Remember, Prichard, you told me yourself that the *pah-dum* could make or break a man. Well, I came out here thinking that I was as tough as they come, that the world was my oyster. But not now. You damn near broke me, Prichard. And knowing it has done me a lot of good. I started to clean out this drag. I'm going to finish the job."

THERE was a long pause. The gong in the *wat* marked the passing of another hour. As its brazen note quivered over the rice-plain and was absorbed in the limitless silence of the jungle, Deng groaned but did not move. Prichard's eyes became uneasy. He had come up against a stone wall, and he knew it.

He asked suddenly, "What d'you think you're going to do about it, Brixton?"

Lee's jaw muscles twitched, and his eyes hardened. "What you did to Vickers, Prichard," he said, "was as close to murder as a man can come without hanging for it. First, and right now, I'm going to do something for him. Then I'm going to send you down, and the company can—"

He tried to twist away as Prichard swung up the heavy, metal stamp. He slipped, recovered, and threw up his arm to protect his head. Prichard's forearm struck his, breaking the full force of the blow. But the sharp corner of the stamp smashed through the cork of his topee, nicked his skull, and he went down on all fours, half-stunned. Then Prichard's knee crashed into the side of his head, and a savage kick rolled him over, flat on his back between two logs.

"Deng, the pike-pole—quick, boy, quick!"

Prichard's voice came to Lee's ears as a faint echo across a vast, fog-bound plain. Then the spike of the pike-pole thudded into the teak close to his head, and, as Deng threw his weight against it, the gap under him widened inch by inch. He was powerless to help himself. The dead weight of Prichard's body lay flat across his chest. His shoulders were sinking between the ever widening gap, and the palm of Prichard's hand was under his chin, forcing his head down, down—

He felt his head touch the water. The chill of it revived him, and with full consciousness came the realization that in a matter of seconds he would be down under the logs, or his head would be crushed like an eggshell between them. The sheer horror of it brought a gasping cry to his lips—then his body convulsed with every ounce of his strength in a last, desperate struggle for life.

His hand reached back for the pike-pole. He grasped it, twisted his body and heaved. He got a glimpse of Prichard's savage face, as his head and shoulders came up. Then Deng jerked the spike from the log, and tried to wrest the pole from Lee's grasp. With the strength that comes of desperation Lee clung to it and, with Deng's unwitting assistance, got his shoulders athwart the log.

"Let go! Let go of it, you fool!" Prichard screamed at Deng, and Lee's fist smashed into his face.

Obediently, Deng let go of the pole just as Lee heaved on it with all his strength to prevent Prichard from shoving him back between the logs. Suddenly released the pole shot forward with terrific force. There was a sickening thud, then Prichard toppled over, the long spike driven into his skull up to the hook.

It took Lee a few seconds to absorb the shock of it. Then, still badly shaken, he got to his feet and looked around for Deng. The Siamese was standing like a man spellbound, his bulging eyes fixed on Prichard's body which lay across the logs, the head horribly twisted by the weight of the pike-pole still imbedded in his skull. As Lee advanced on him, Deng, thinking that his last moments had come, sank to his knees, whimpering like a monkey.

"Master, oh Master!" he pleaded. "I am a small fellow, an ignorant fellow! I do what the white lords say—"

"Where did you hide the money?" Lee demanded.

"I tell you, I am your friend, Master! It is under the mattress of your cot in the bungalow."

"Why, you slimey little—I've a good mind to—"

"No, Master—no!"

"You'll talk to the Amphur, eh, Deng?"
"Yes—oh, yes, Master, I will tell all!"

LATER, Lee wrote out a disposition, and then escorted Deng to the village. There he called the Amphur from his bed, and handed Deng over to him for safe keeping until such times as His Majesty the King of Siam, the Lord of Heaven, Defender of the Buddhist Faith and Prince of the White Elephants, should become appraised of his subject's delinquencies and make his pleasure known.

"You told me that you would help me, Uncle," said Lee, "if it were not that your people feared the curse on the Me Lao forest. Now that you have locked up the curse in your guard room, I would know if the promise of the Amphur of Kiang Chi is good."

"It is good, my son. My people will sleep better knowing that there is no evil in our forest. They will work hard for you."

The leaves of the teak were red when Lee rode out of the semi-dark of the Me Lao forest, out into the scorching glare of the dusty road across the rice-plain, followed by his Karens, ox-carts and tuskless elephants. He sat his pony with his battered topee set at a slightly rakish angle; for behind him there was a job well done, and before him there were other forests to conquer. In his pocket there was a letter from headquarters, informing him of Bradley's arrest and confession. More important were the few words which conveyed deep satisfaction with his recent work in the Me Lao forest.

Not much, but when he considered the high source from which they had emanated, he found those words full of promise. It was a little premature, he admitted, but he felt the equal of any *burrasahib*—more than equal, in fact, because he was young, *sans* the gout, a bad liver and the shivers and shakes.

From a nearby hillside a Lao girl watched until the little caravan vanished into its own dust. Then she walked slowly down to the village, her head erect, her smile as serene as that of the old, bronze Buddha in the temple of Kiang Chi.

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THE GHOST OF THE

The 099 is free now—
she wants her way....

I'M JUST back from vacation, knee-deep in work reports, and trying to figure out how to tell the chief dispatcher why we stuck the Bean Train an hour and forty-two minutes the night before and still keep my ears, when the squawk-box over my head lets out a bellow that makes me jump a foot.

"All right, you phony Harry Lauder," the intercom blats. "Bring it up here. On the double."

Rocker-Box Bill Sullivan's office is only a dozen or so rail lengths from the round-house—he needs a communication system like I need a B-29. But he sounds like a hen laying a hex-nut, and I smell trouble stinking like green coal in a leaky firebox.

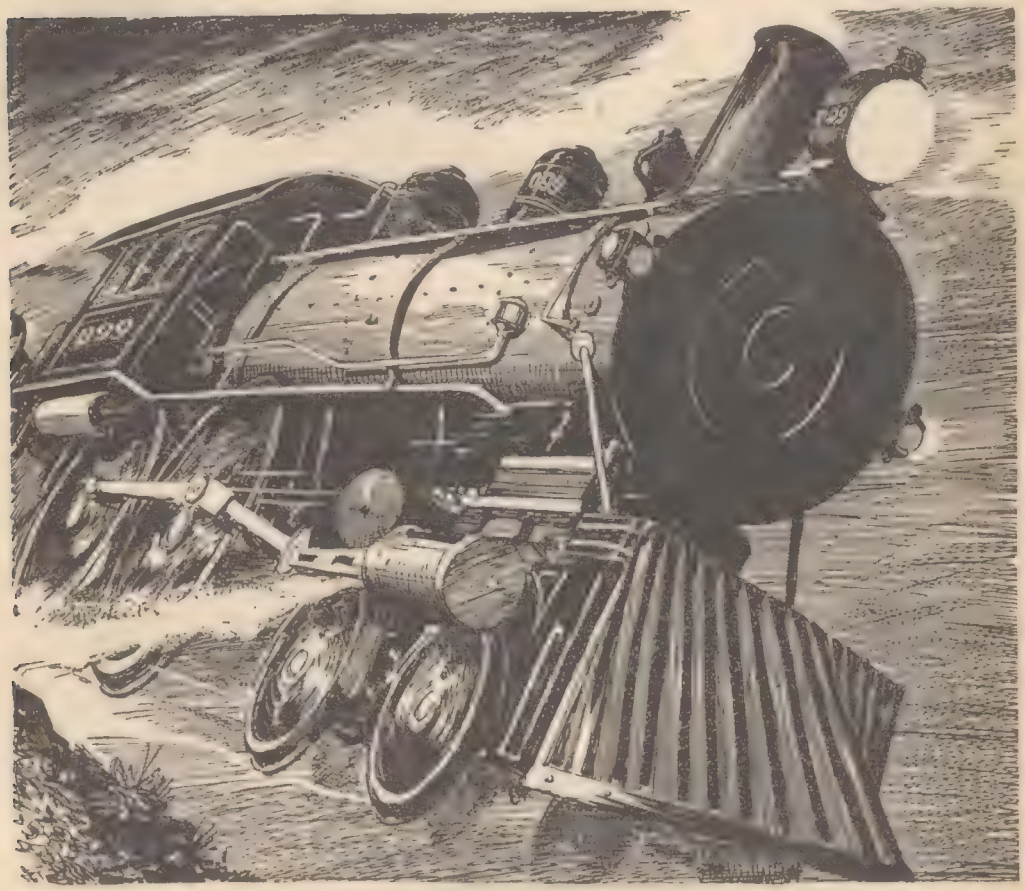
"Right wi' ye, Napoleon," I bark at the talk-back speaker. "Take a reef in your kilt. I'm a busy lad."

The splutter that explodes out of the snitch-box blisters what paint there is left on the dingy walls, but I'm out of effective range before he gets around to my ancestral

099

By JACK CLINTON McCLARN

The story of the fastest train in the world—and her greatest, ghostly run . . .



deficiencies. Rocker-Box Bill was my C.O. in the old 727th—chickens on his shoulders and ants in his ill-fitting pinks. He's still my C.O.—master mechanic for the S.G.&A. at Branchville. I'm his general foreman, which means that I'm the guy who takes the rap for everything that goes wrong between Plains City and the gates of hell.

And judging from the racket he's making over the bullhorns something new has gone haywire, so I light a rag up through the shop to the master mechanic's den like a committeeman with a brand new gripe.

Rocker-Box Bill is all hunched up behind his king-sized desk. He's a tough little nut-splitter who came up the hard way, a mechanic with a know-how I'd throw against the whole Purdue backfield plus the M.I.T. line any day in the week. And he is as unpredictable as an extra-board brakeman on payday.

"Na, na, laddie," I begin in my best Glasgow burr. "It wasna' our fault. The Four-Nine-Nine-Eight was due hydrostatic,

and the Four-Eight-Seven-One was leakin' like a busted rain-barrel. So I go to the chute to get the Four-Eight-Six—"

He points a stubby finger at me. "Can it," he snarls, "before I chop your ears off and feed 'em to the hogs." Then he seems to catch himself and tries a grin. The smell of trouble gets thicker than the air in Billy Wright's Blacksmith Shop. "Did you by any chance ever hear of an engine called the O-Ninety-Nine?"

I cock an eye at him. "Only for thirty years, come next Michaelmas," I say. "Only since the black day when in my innocence I walk into this blasted skunkworrks and sign my name on an apprenticeship indenture. Only since that crowd of border thieves on the S.G.&A. moved in on the only decent short line railroad east of the Mississippi. May the ghosts of the A.M.&P. foul their unhallowed graves—"

The grin spreads wider—he shoves a piece of paper at me.

"Read it, Scotty," he chuckles. "And quit crying all over my rug. Read it."

It's a 95-Green, a priority telegram, signed by the chief of motive power himself.

SULLIVAN, BRANCHVILLE SHOP ARRANGE RESTORE ENGINE 099 ORIGINAL CONDITION USE BUILDERS DIAGRAMS FORWARDED AIRMAIL YESTERDAY CHARGE AFE 20656 EXPEDITE

BLEEKER, CMP

I crumple the thing up and throw at him, and I forget my accent.

"The guy's off his rocker!" I howl. "Great balls of fire—that blasted hunk of scrap has been under water for thirty years and better. We were both snotty-nosed squirts in short drawers when Smoky Joe Schwotzer turned her over into Cypress River. You know blamed well we used to catch suckers right where she went down. How in the pink-toed blue blazes—"

He makes a noise like a leaky pop valve, jabs a thumb at the window. "Knock it off, Highlander," he says smug as a timekeeper on Christmas. "And take a gander down the shop lead."

I look where he points, and my eyes bug out. The shop switcher is backing slowly toward the erecting shop, and it is dragging something behind it. The wind is blowing toward us, bearing a faint stench of dead fish and river mud. Then I see what it is.

IT'S AN engine. A 4-4-0, and there hasn't been a coffeepot like that on the S.G.&A. since the days of Old 97. She's a little thing, even the shop goat looks bigger. Her drivers are high, seven feet or better. Her slatted pilot is all busted, but it still sticks out like the prow of a ship. Her slender stack looks like the chimney of a river steamer. And from the top of her stack to her loose hanging brake rigging, she is a slimy, mud-caked mess.

The shop goat drags her past the office, I can see Pete Harrison in the cab holding his nose. The air exhausting from her open ports sounds like huge gasps with something of a death-rattle behind them. A sudden jar shakes loose something that must have been under her bell clapper, and there is a deep, booming clang that reverberates through the shop like a gong.

It makes me shiver.

"It took two two-fifty-ton derricks, Scotty." Rocker-Box Bill isn't grinning now. "But we got her out of Cypress River last week. After thirty years. Orders."

He reaches under his desk, hauls out a roll of blueprints the size of a driving axle.

"Here's the dope," he says. "Photostats of the original builder's prints. Down to the last cockeyed rivet. Read 'em."

I stare at the black-and-white sheets and a date jumps out at me. Holy mackerel—eighteen-ninety-three!

"But—but—" I sound like a track scooter on a frosty morning. "Why in the blue-bellied hell would anybody be batty enough to want a bunch of junk glued back together? You know blamed well how far behind I am on boiler work—"

He shrugs. "Scotty, we don't eat high up enough on the hog to mess around with instructions, but I got it pretty straight. A model railroad bug on the board of directors. He draws enough water to float a battleship. Somebody told him about the O-Ninety-Nine—he wants her to run again. Good publicity angle, at that."

He grins at me. "All right, tough guy," he says. "Order what you can. Make the rest. And stay the hell out of here."

I pick up the stack of photostats. If Rocker-Box Bill tells me to go soak my head I'm hunting a wash-pot. At the door he calls me back. The grin is gone.

"Scotchman," he says, very quietly.

"We've robbed a grave. She's a corpse." He's looking out at the 099. The goldleaf of her ancient tank monogram is showing faintly through the slime. "She's been dead and buried these thirty years. Maybe she'd rather stay dead. Be careful, Scotty. I got a feelin'—"

IT'S LATE afternoon; everybody's gone but me when they spot the 099 where I want her. I climb into her cab, play my flash over the filthy interior, the reek of dead fish making me gag. I'm standing where two men died thirty years ago, when the little engine took her plunge to glory from the hairpin curve at Cypress River, miraculously not dragging her two-coach train with her. I'm the first man to set foot in that cab since the divers went down and took Smoky Joe Schwotzer and his fireman out. I remember the story—how there hadn't been even a mark on the ties to show where the 099 left the rail. She just went up in the air—and Smoky Joe was a cautious runner. Surely he must have eased down for a spine-wrencher like Cypress River Curve—

Then I see something that turns me chilly all over. I snap off my light, slide down out of the cab, and walk away.

For thirty years the 099 has rested on the bottom of Cypress River. She is now just as she was that ghastly minute when she left the track. Her engine brake lever is in full release. Her train brake handle is in emergency position. And her throttle is open. Wide open. Going into a curve that would give a swamp-moccasin pause, the 099 was giving all she had. And for a high-wheeler like the 099, that meant a speed of—

All at once I am scared. And I don't know why.

IT TAKES four months to do the job. Mako Patrim, the Machine Shop Foreman, worries himself into a new case of ulcers making the stuff that no stock sheet has carried for a half century. Pete Sarratt paints a white line on the floor of his boiler shop and dares me to set so much as a single toe over it. My wife takes the kids and the dog home to her mother's until I

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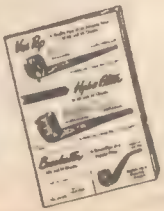

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can act human again. Rocker-Box Bill and me speak only through third parties, and I'm fifteen pounds lighter and fifteen years older when we finally drag the 099 out of the back shop and to the fire-up shed.

She's as much like she was the day she came out of the locomotive works in '93 as I can make her. I use as much of the original stuff as the good Lord will allow, but she's no spotweld and baling-wire job; she's as ready now as she is fifty years ago. All but setting her pops. And that pop-setting job is one I am doing personal, when the bull horns begin bellowing at me. So I go wash my hands, scrape an inch of grease off my feet, and trot over to the big office.

Rocker-Box Bill is there, and there's somebody else with him. A fat, watery-eyed, youngish little man. J. Melville Bleeker—chief of motive power of the whole blamed S.G.&A. system.

He blinks at me, offers a surprisingly strong hand for me to shake, and Rocker-Box Bill clears his throat like something is choking him.

"Scotty," he says. "Mr. Bleeker isn't too happy with the cost sheets for Branchville Shop. I'd like for you to sit in—"

"If you don't mind, Mr. Sullivan," Bleeker squeaks. "I'll interrogate the gentleman." He's playing with a gold something on his watch chain. It looks like a tennis racket. "Now, Mr. General Foreman, suppose we begin at the beginning."

Thirty minutes later I'm reduced to a state of inarticulate fury. Rocker-Box Bill is staring out the window, his face as red as the back end of a new caboose. Bleeker is merciless. Nothing is right. We are guilty of every crime in the book. "Criminal stupidity. . . . Gross waste of the carrier's money. . . . Sloppy performance. . . ." are the mildest terms he uses. And I finally get enough.

"Cap," I manage to say without exploding. "If you want to sit here and take this, okay. You can take this job and—"

The door crashes open, Mose Culpeper, my fire-up man, plunges headlong into the office. His face is a pasty gray.

"Mist' Scotty," he pants. "Betteh you come. Th' ninety-nine—she ain't actin' right. I fiah her up like you say—"

What hair I have left springs to attention. "Fire her up?" I yell. "Fire her—she ain't got a sign of a pop valve! She's capped—"

Rocker-Box Bill takes off from behind his desk faster than he did the day I drop a red-hot rivet in his back overall pocket when we were serving our time. We hit the cab of the 099 almost together and I freeze as I look at the steam gauge. The hand is right slap against the peg and quivering like a hound pup in a snowstorm.

There's a white-hot fire in the firebox, and God only knows how much steam pressure there is in that boiler. The engine is dancing like a burlesque queen, ominous metallic creaks and pops are coming from the strained metal, her staybolts are breaking under the multiplying pressure—a little more and she's going to disintegrate in a blast that will put Branchville Shop in big headlines.

"S-wrench, you knuckleheaded idiot!" Rocker-Box Bill is screaming in my ear. "Exhaust port—get it open! Move, dammit, move!"

There's a flat, S-shaped wrench lying on the ground, I fall clear out of the cab, grab it. The square-headed plug in the exhaust port on the cylinder is tight, but the threads finally give, I run it out like I'm grinding coffee. Just as it falls free I let out a yell and Rocker-Box Bill yanks the throttle open.

The blast of superheated steam through the exhaust port blows my cap thirty feet, the screaming roar deafens me, I stumble over a rail and cover another thirty feet in a plunging fall, plowing headlong into Bleeker, taking him out of the play like my kid handles the opposition up at State.

The shriek of the escaping steam brings half the shop force out in the open; they scatter like a bunch of startled jackasses, but it is the sweetest music I ever hear. It has been close. Two minutes maybe, two lousy little minutes. . . .

Bleeker is lying under me, cursing steadily in his squeaky voice. "Shut up," I growl. "Be thankful you're alive."

WE HOLD kangaroo court in Rocker-Box Bill's office late that afternoon. It's my fault, unless I want to blame my fireboy, who didn't know from nothing. So I take the rap.

"Up to me, cap," I tell Rocker-Box Bill,

like a hero. "I didn't tell Mose to lay off the fire-up job."

Bleeker is scowling at the smear of grease on his two hundred buck gabardine, at the wreck of his white snap-brim Borsalino. Rocker-Box Bill glares at me.

"All right, you dumb Scotchman," he says finally. "Get out of here. And for Pete's sake, try to get something right for a change."

"A minute, Sullivan," Bleeker says in that squeaky, fat man's voice of his. "An occurrence like this just isn't an incident to be passed over lightly. It's an indication. A serious indication. Sullivan, what is your background?"

I blink at the fat little guy. He's playing with that gold key-shaped thing on his watch chain again. There's a funny look in his watery eyes.

"Background?" Rocker-Box Bill says, slow-like. Bleeker frowns impatiently.

"Yes, that's what I said. Background." He snaps the word out like it tastes bad. "Education, Sullivan. Training. Where were you graduated? From what school. When?"

Rocker-Box Bill looks at Bleeker a long time. Then he pushes a button on his desk. Billy Deacon, his chief clerk, pokes his head in the door.

"Get my personnel sheet, Billy," Rocker-Box Bill says, tired-like. When Billy, looking scared like most pencil-pushers, brings him the form, Rocker-Box Bill slides it across to Bleeker. The fat little guy glances at it, nods his head.

"Sixth grade education, eh?" he says, like he is smelling something. "Well, that explains a lot of things."

I heave my six-feet-one out of my chair, walk over to him. "Just what does it explain, mister?" I say, nasty as I can make it. "So the boss didn't go to Purdue. Okay, so a dumb foreman makes a bust and nearly blows this place off the map. What's the connection? Maybe you make sense to you, but not to me."

His eyes are brimming as he looks up at me.

"It means, my tough-talking friend," he says, putting the tips of his fingers together like a Hollywood model Dominie. "That your day of railroading by guess and by God is gone. There's no place for glorified nut-splitters any more. We can hire them for peanuts. We need specialists. Trained men. Sorry."

He lets the words lay there, heaves himself out of his chair.

"Sullivan, have the O-Ninety-Nine ready for a test run two weeks from today—if you think you can. I shall ride her myself. Good-day, gentlemen."

He walks out without so much as a kiss-my-foot-go-to-hell. I stomp over to the window and swear a frosting over the glass. When I look at Rocker-Box Bill again he's rubbing that left eyebrow, staring past me at the 099.

"So you're taking stuff from that—that pot-gutted sweetheart of Sigma Chi, are you?" I bellow at him. "Why in hell didn't you give me the word—I'd of throwed him out of the office."

"Pipe down, Socrates," he says, almost gently. "Did you see that thing he's wearing? That, my laddie, is a Phi Beta Kappa key. Fatso might be a stuffed shirt, but he didn't get that for good looks. And what're you so tough about? How much is it costing you to keep that kid of yours up at State?"

"Hell, cap, that's different," I begin, feeling my face get red. But he grins at me.

"Scotty," he says. "There was another engine like the O-Ninety-Nine once. She made quite a name for herself. If you've done the job I think you have, maybe we could do the same thing."

I stare at him. He's getting that look on his face. I begin to sweat.

"What kind of a record could that undersized bunch of junk make?" I demand, sarcastic as a traveling auditor with a fouled-up time sheet. "Boiling Easter eggs?"

"It was quite a record," he goes on thoughtfully. "It would be a record even now. Scotty, my lad, an engine bearing the number Nine-Ninety-nine, on a certain day in May, eighteen-ninety-three, clipped off a hundred and twelve and a half miles an hour."

I sink into the nearest chair. "A hundred and twelve and a what?" I howl, feeling like somebody has kicked me in the stomach. "With a stripped-down tin-can like the O-Ninety-Nine? Listen, cap, that blasted fugitive from a junk yard has already killed two good men. She took a healthy crack at killing a lot more today. And—"

"So Mister Big wants to ride her on a test run, eh?" Rocker-Box Bill is grinning now, and I shiver. The last time I see that grin I wind up in an African desert stealing the rods off a locomotive right under the snout of a Kraut named Rommel. "Okay, Scotty, my lad. Beat it over to the boiler shop and help Pete Sarratt get the staybolts back in that teakettle. I think Mister Bleeker is going to have a ride for himself. Yep—it should be quite a ride."

WE ARE lucky. Instead of coming apart at the seams like a dried-out rowboat, the 099 merely busts about half of her radial stays. Pete Sarratt threatens to run my fingers through the staybolt threading machine, but he three-shifts the 099 and two weeks later when Bleeker's shiny private car rolls into Branchville we're ready.

He's got enough top brass with him to start a foundry. They make with the cameras all over the 099, and I don't blame them; she's beautiful. All shiny black paint and gleaming brass—even the tangled fish-line of a monogram on her tank, a monogram that hasn't existed for thirty years, is authentic. The symbol of a long-dead railroad—the A.M.&P.—I have it gold-leafed every place there is room enough.

I have been running the engine up and down the main line for three days, her valves are as true as a couple of newly-weds, her exhaust cracks like a howitzer, she's as wound up as a hopped-up race horse at the barrier. I feel sort of proud as the hostler backs her down and couples to the lightweight baggage car and Bleeker's private car, the test train.

Rocker-Box Bill walks up and winks at me.

Bleeker, wearing a suit of coveralls that still have the store tags on them, struts up the platform, followed by his yes-men.

"Ready, Sullivan?" he squeaks. "I'd like to talk with your engineer. Where is he?"

Rocker-Box Bill wipes his hands on his overalls. "You're talking to him, Mr. Bleeker," he says blandly. Bleeker blinks at him.

"Very funny, Sullivan," he says. "Now, let's cut the horseplay. Where's your engine crew?"

"Right here, Mr. Bleeker," Rocker-Box Bill grins at me. "I've carried a card in the B.ofL.E. for a long time. And Scotty is a fireboy from way back. The men who would have taken the run are, by a strange conicidence, marked off sick. So rather than delay the test run—"

He waves a hand at me. I grin and freeze it It had cost Rocker-Box Bill and me two boxes of cigars to set up the deal. But the look on Bleeker's face makes it worth it. For a minute I think he's going to blow, but there's a funny streak of stubbornness behind his fat face. He looks at his group of satellites.

"Get aboard, gentlemen," he says. "I'm riding the O-Ninety-Nine." He turns to Rocker-Box Bill and me. "All right, you two," he announces. "Whenever you're ready, we'll go."

He climbs up into the cab, settles himself on the fireman's side. The 099 is trembling like a greyhound and Rocker-Box Bill winks at me as we crawl up behind Bleeker.

"Keep her hot, Scotty," he says. "We're going to ride."

The communicating signal whistle gives a couple of peeps, Rocker-Box Bill kicks the brakes off, looks over the boilerhead at Bleeker.

"Hey, boss," he calls. "Ever hear of a train called the Empire State Express? And the Nine-Ninety-Nine?"

He cracks the throttle, the eighty-six inch drivers spin a couple of revolutions—he drops a hatful of sand on the rail, and the bob-tailed train moves off.

Bleeker looks down at me.

"The Nine-Ninety-Nine," he says thoughtfully. "I seem to remember—" His face goes fish-belly white. "What the hell is this? Sullivan—"

Rocker-Box Bill widens on the throttle, the exhaust of the 099, sharp as the bark of a fox-terrier on a frosty night, bites the air, we clatter over the switches and head for open country at a speed already something to think about. I spit on my hands, grab my scoop, and go to work.

It's a ride to remember. Fifty miles and a whole new crop of blisters later we stop at Weyburn chute for coal and water. I have burned enough coal in that undersized firebox to take a Mikado over the whole division, but we're only halfway to Port City. But I have seen the needle on the speed gauge touch the nine of ninety-five,

and, brother, that's fast enough for this Scotsman.

Bleeker is fairly bursting with fury when Rocker-Box Bill yanks the 099 to a stop. He bounces off his seat and onto the deck.

"Why, you—you maniac!" he storms at Rocker-Box Bill. "What are you trying to do—kill everybody on this train? I'm taking you out of service right now—"

Rocker-Box Bill strips off his gloves, thrusts his snub nose inches from the chief of motive power's quivering face.

"Listen, you," he says, low and soft. "You wanted the O-Ninety-Nine put back like she was the day she was built. Okay. She came out at the same time as another engine. That engine did a hundred and twelve and a half. So will the O-Ninety-Nine. If you want to ride, all right. If not—get off. Now. But until we hit Port City, this is my engine. It's up to you." Then he grins and I shiver. "Or," he says, "maybe they don't give out those Phi Beta Kappa keys for guts."

Bleeker winces like Rocker-Box Bill has spat in his face. Without a word he climbs back on the fireman's seat box, sits staring straight ahead. I finish taking my coal and water, slide back to the deck. I'm so tight that you can't drive a shingle nail in me anywhere. For I know where we are. The next twenty miles the division drops down a gentle, even grade. Not the sign of a curve anywhere. Not until the hair-raising right-angle turn at Cypress River.

Cypress River. Cypress River. . . .

I get myself a drink from the cooler, bend my back to see if it's still all there. Rocker-Box Bill nods at me, notches out on the throttle and the little train moves off, just as the sudden dark of the low country seems to come up out of the ground.

A WATERY moon is breaking through the clouds as we top the grade and I draw a long breath. From there on it's like falling into a well. The 099 quivers in every bolt as Rocker-Box Bill gives her her head. He's switched on the headlight; the silver funnel of light stabs through the dark and the flat bark of the exhaust stortens until it is a steady thundering roar. I brace my backside against the edge of the cab and bale the coal to her, trying not to think about what lies not too far ahead.

Rocker-Box Bill lays hold of the whistle cord and the deep-throated bellow of the big brass whistle nearly lifts the top of my head off.

The 099 is like a flying feather, the terrific draft caused by the thundering exhaust nearly drags the scoop out of my blistered hands as I do the damnedest job of firing any scoop artist ever did. Again I look at the gauge. A hundred and seven. Bleeker follows my look. A hundred ten. Eleven. Twelve—

And the chief of motive power cracks wide open.

"Sullivan—Sullivan—" he is screaming over the clean, sharp exhaust of the 099. "Shut off—for God's sake, man, shut off—"

Rocker-Box Bill looks down at him and laughs. I see his hand tighten on the throttle, and something flashes white hot into my mind. I know what has been scaring the hell out of me for the past months.

"Bill—don't—" I yell. "Don't—"

But I'm a little late. That crazy grin spreading all over his face, like a kid with a brand-new Hopalong Cassidy suit, he yanks the throttle of the ghost engine clear back in the tank. The 099 gives a shuddering lurch, jumps like a spurred cowpony, the hand on the speed gauge jerks spasmodically. A hundred and twelve. Thirteen. Fourteen. Fifteen—

I shove Bleeker away from me. He yelps in pain and fear as he bounces against the sizzling boilerhead. I grab Bill's arm.

"Shut off, you crazy fool!" I bawl at him. "Dammit, shut off, before I brain you. I mean it!"

He says something I can't hear, looks a little disappointed. Then his own face goes as white as mine—he stares at me. His lips are moving, I can't hear him, but I know down inside me what he's saying.

He can't shut the 099 down. She's as wide open as a three-card straight, and he can't shut her down!

Just then the *"dang-dang-dang-dang"* of a road crossing bell rises then fades behind us. And the hair goes straight up on my head. I know where we are. Five miles from now there is the hair-raiser of Cypress River Curve. Five miles from now is the one-time watery grave of the 099. And we are doing damned near a hundred and twenty miles an hour—two miles a minute.

I have to do something. I throw my own weight against the throttle of the 099. It's stuck. And I know we are dead men.

Rocker-Box Bill cups his hands around my ear, yells at me. "Bleeker—you—" he shouts over the hellish roar of the wild engine. "Hit the tops! Fast!"

It flashes over me what he means. We have a chance. I grab Bleeker, jerk him after me. He's no dope. He gets the pitch, follows me up the coal to the back of the tank. And at a hundred-and-God-knows-what miles an hour, we make it across the ghastly gap between the tank and the top of the swaying, pounding baggage car.

"Grab iron!" I scream in Bleeker's ear.

Flat on my belly, I got to see. I lift my head, squinting against the vicious drive of the smoke from the tall stack of the 099. A mile away now, the headlight is glinting on the rails of the vicious curve. I think I say a little prayer. The whistle of the 099 lets go with a sound like the wail of the lost souls in hell—and the brakes on the train slam down with a thump.

The bob-tailed train lurches like some giant hand has laid hold of it.

Bleeker clamps one fat hand into my collar. There is a screaming, tearing shriek of wood and metal parting company, and the draft gear rips out of the end of the baggage car like a cork out of a jug. The 099 tears herself free and plunges away from us, her whistle screaming a fiendish requiem, and I watch something I never forget.

The metal of her flanges screams like a woman in agony as her big engine truck hits the curve. For a second I think she's going to make it. But the 099 is free now—she wants her way. And she has it.

She leaves the curve, her headlight points straight out over the sullen river. She seems to hang in the air. There is a deafening roar, a hissing splash, and it's all over.

The baggage car and Bleeker's private car, their wheels locked and sliding, worn down clear into the web of the wheels, grate to a shuddering stop. Bubbles are breaking in the black water, steam filled bubbles, marking the resting place of the 099. Back in her grave once more.

And Rocker-Box Bill—

Bleeker slides over the edge of the baggage car, goes down the ladder with the peculiar agility of a fat man. Before I can move, he's stripped off his coveralls, and he's sliding down the steep bank. I yell at him, but he hits the water.

Bleeker's yes-men come boiling out of the private car, most of them trying to be sick. I sit down on the end of a cross-tie. It's going to be tough.

There is a chorus of yells as something splits the water in the moonlight. It's Bleeker—and he's towing Rocker-Box Bill behind him. And Bleeker's voice, not squeaky now, comes floating up to us.

"If you gentlemen don't mind—it's cold down here."

And all at once I'm bawling like a spanked baby in fly time.

There is hell to pay for everybody. When we fish the 099 out of Cypress River for the second time, and I go into her with an acetylene torch, the story is there for us all to see. To Bleeker's pointed question, with his secretary putting it all down, I have the answer.

"He did what he had to," I tell him. "He knew it was him. Or everybody. He held off his engine brake. He shot the breeze to his train. That locked the car wheels. The O-Ninety-Nine was free—and wide open. Something had to give. He gambled it would be the draft gear in the baggage car."

Bleeker wags his head. "But why didn't be shut off?" he demands. "Hell, he—"

I point to the throttle rigging, spread out on the shop floor. The same tricky rigging that killed Smoky Joe Schmotzer thirty years ago.

"A cotter key, mister," I say. "A lousy, six-cent cotter key, caught on a rivet head. The throttle comes out—but once it's wide open, it don't go back. Wherever Smoky Joe Schwotzer is now, he's not wondering what happened."

I draw a long breath. "Now, cap," I say. "What do you want done with this—murderin' heap of scrap iron."

He looks at the sleek lines of the 099, the high stack, the busted pilot. He's fingering that key-thing on his watch chain. "Her bell," he says, finally. "There's a little church up the valley where I live. Ship the bell to me. The rest of her—"

He looks at me, a faint grin on his fat face. He draws a slow finger across his throat.

"Lay the ghost, Scotty," he says. "Lay the ghost."

DEERSHEAD

A skeleton skull with a pair of horns,
Antlers, five point spread,
Adorns the wall, but the luminous eyes
Are gone, and the deer is dead.

A soft nose nuzzled the tawny flank
Of a trembling doe in heat;
Passion was touched with Divinity;
In love conceived, replete.

The fawn, as it grew, pulsated with life.
Its body was graceful and warm;
The soul that it had was a part of God,
Beauty multiform.

Its horns grew hard and slender and strong;
Its ears were velvety silk;
Its eyes were large and beautifully brown;
Its throbbing throat, like milk.

Out of Nature and Passion and Love
This wild-woods creature was born,
But all that is left is a haunted thing
Of splintered white bone and horn.

And men nail it up in the name of art,
An ornament of the chase,
While the cavernous eyes, black holes, look out
Of the ghostly, bony face.

A skeleton skull with a pair of horns,
Antlers, five point spread,
Adorns the wall, but the luminous eyes
Are gone. . . . The deer is dead.

—Kathryn Healy Roberts

All the time he was singing—
he must have been very happy. . . .

NO MAN'S BANNER

A MODERN STORY OF YESTERDAY

THE trumpets were sounded, and the pursuivants, ceasing to scream of the strength and virtues of their masters, scrambled over the barrier. One of the pursuivants was Hal, ludicrous as always. Panting, he handed Giles the lance.

Giles shook it. He had used it for both the previous passages without great shock. It was ash, about ten feet long, tipped with Poitou steel. He saw no reason why he shouldn't use it again.

He nodded. Since he wore no plume, and since his nod was careless and slight, it may be that those in the galleries did not see that he was ready to ride. Giles didn't care. He had a better sign for them. For he knew that they were all watching him—and he knew why. Not only was his helm unplumed and his shield without device, but he had just unhorsed two champions with the greatest of ease; yet like stout Sam under him, Sir Giles sweated not at all.

He knew that they were wondering who he was, and thinking, there in the galleries, that if he toppled this next one he'd be winner of the Great Chaplet.

Yes, Giles had a sign for them. He snicked his falchion half out, and kissed its pommel. Imbedded there, beneath a dirty chunk of glass, was what had been sold to Giles as a veritable bit of wax scraped from one of the ears of the martyred St. Basil of Stornaway. Giles supsected Hal of having replaced the original bit of whatever-it-was with something fresher and more waxlike, doubtless selling the original. All the same,

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

why not kiss it before going into combat? You might as well play safe. Besides, it looked ominous. Not that Sir Giles gave a belch in a gale of wind what the galleries thought of him. He never had, in tourneys. He thought only of the man ahead. But that very man—he could be impressed, and sometimes was, doubtless wondering what token, what magic Giles was using.

Giles snicked the sword back. There was a cheer. The trumpets blared again.

"Go—with St. George!"

Giles held his shield over on the right side, and leaned low toward it, his chin almost touching the top of it. The lance he kept parallel with the earth, but he held it none too firmly. His fingers would tighten at the last instant, and then he'd direct the shaft. Meanwhile Sams' hoofs thudded clear and hard. *There* was a charger! Giles had often wondered how much of his success he owed to the stallion. This knight he was coursing against now—and Giles was watching him, slant-eyed, over the top of the shield as Sam gathered speed—was a big man, presumably strong, and he sat a big charger. But when they met, the weight, or at any rate the greater force, thanks to Sam, would be on Giles' side.

Giles tightened his grip. They met.

Giles saw the dust spin, heard the hoofs thunder, heard the squeal of leather—but the shock in fact was trifling. Giles had been braced for something tremendous. He had parried the other's point readily enough, but his own had clicked harmlessly off into space, so that Giles himself pitched forward, who had thought to rear back; while Sam, thrown a little sideways by the fact that the lance had gone between horse's neck and rider, did a couple of wild steps, teetering. For a split-second it seemed that Sam might fall. But he recovered, and as Giles brought the lance back to challenge position, still only using his knees to handle the horse, they turned neatly, and stood, erect, alert.

It had been a poor enough passage, with glory for nobody. Giles felt his face go hot. Who was this jouster, anyway? Giles had not caught the name when the pursuivants were shouting, nor, because of the nose-piece and the high-fastened camail, could he make much of the face. The shield was white, and on it was painted a knotted green snake.

Now Giles scowled, biting skin from the inside of his mouth. He knew what had happened. The knight had leaned forward at the last instant, tipping his shield a trifle to the left, *his* left, as it caught Giles' point. This was a dangerous trick, unless you were sure of your charger and utterly sure of your own lance-work; for if the blow was parried—as this time it had been—the lance would go between you and your charger's neck, making it as likely that you would be unhorsed as that your opponent would be, in either case clumsily, ignominiously.

Giles of No Land, the Knight of Nowhere, was the more angry because that trick happened to be one of his own favorites.

He waggled his shield to indicate readiness, and he lowered the point of his lance. He'd be more careful this time.

The trumpets were sounded, the signal was given.

Going in, Giles felt good. He knew that this one would be right. He fell into no unusual position, gave the other jouster no clue, and watched him catlike, oblivious of everything else in the world.

Just before the crash the knight leaned a little farther forward, crouched lower, and tilted his shield slightly toward the left, *his* left. God's eyes! The fool was going to try the same trick again! Giles might have grinned, as the crash came. The men had no lance-rests, the lances no grips. Giles had lifted his right arm farther from his body, bringing the point in. The other knight had moved very fast. Giles had moved faster.

Both chargers rose high. A saddle girth snapped. Then the Knight of the Snake was on the ground.

But there was fight left in him. Though stunned, he was not otherwise hurt. He propped himself on an elbow, shaking his head; and when varlets came running he waved them away. He rose, steadier now. He drew. There was a cheer.

Giles dismounted, though with regret. Giles was no longer fond of fighting. He'd outgrown that, as anybody who fights for a living must.

He hung his shield around his neck by its leathern loop in order to free his left arm. He drew. Holding the sword in both hands, he ceremoniously kissed the pommel. Then he put the blade over his right shoulder and advanced, walking fast.

But Hal ran out into the lists, pointing, shouting something. There was a burst of applause. Giles turned, and saw that the duke had raised the white baton. The fight was over. There was no need for it to continue to the death. These gentle champions could live to battle again—on the morrow, for example, at the mêlée.

GILES was pleased. He bowed gravely, and spread his arms as though to express reluctant submission, for this much was expected of him; but in fact he was delighted. He'd had enough for the day. And now his ransoms were certain.

The other knight was furious, understandably. Glowering, sword in hand, he made a stiff bow, to which Giles responded.

"Sir Raoul of Ranthill, sire. One of my men will take the gold to your tent tonight."

Giles made a deprecating motion. Inwardly, again, he was delighted. He had not counted upon this. Ranthill was a rich holding—the ransom would be a big one.

Here at Chevron, as elsewhere in the kingdom, it was the custom for an unhorsed knight to surrender his charger and armor to the man who had unhorsed him. That at least was the theory. In practice, money was paid instead. The sum had nothing to do with the actual value of armor and horse but was based on the wealth or importance of the loser.

Sir Giles of No Land—that rarity, an adubbed knight without estate—had this day run three courses, all of them successful. The ransoms for the first two would not be big, for his opponents then had been the younger sons of poor barons. Sue a beggar, as the saying was, and get a louse. But Ranthill—that was something different.

"Had not my girth broken," Sir Raoul said slowly, "the encounter might have ended otherwise."

"True." Noncommittally. Giles might have felt sorry for the knight if he hadn't chanced to dislike him. It was the fortunes of play-war. The same thing had happened to Giles himself, and more than once.

"You will grant me the honor of being opposite to you in the mêlée tomorrow?"

"Truest story ever told!"

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"I'll not attend the mêlée," Giles said curtly. "I am leaving tonight for London Town."

"You fear to be wounded?"

It was an insult so uncalled-for, and spoken in such a low, almost polite voice, that for an instant Giles did not believe his own ears. He had been sheathing; but he withdrew his falchion. He took a step toward Sir Raoul, who raised his blade.

"Now by the twelve apostles—"

But Hal got in his way. And Raoul's squires and varlets too interfered. And the champions themselves, though they didn't cool, remembered their duty to their host. It would be unmannerly to fight further after the duke had raised the baton.

Giles turned away quickly. He was afraid that if he looked at Sir Raoul much longer he'd forget the duke and everyone else. Hal helped him to mount.

There was a great deal of cheering when Giles rode around the lists. Ladies threw gloves, sleeves, scarves, flowers, which he ignored. He reined before the marshals' stand, facing the duke. He was very tired, and hot, and streaked with sweat now; and he wished that this part of the business were over with.

The Great Chaplet was a somewhat tawdry contrivance, consisting of white flowers already beginning to wilt. Giles was not awed, though he held the thing respectfully enough, even reverently. He had won a sufficient number of these. Surely he was no stranger to tourneys! To him they meant tilting, they meant money; so that he rode from one to another making a tolerable living. But in essence tourneys were show-things. They were displays. They were toy wars, here at home, complete with pomp, with blood, with banners and pennons and trumpets—and prizes.

Let there be a christening, an adubbement, a marriage, and the baron, howsoever petty, was almost obliged to arrange a tourney in celebration thereof. Not only the barons and knights from all around, together with their squires and varlets, sometimes even their ladies, but also the jugglers and montebanks came, the merchants, minstrels, Morris-dancers, and the leering women of low estate—in short, the whole transportable countryside.

Giles was no lover of tourneys; but he knew what was expected of him. He said the proper things in the proper tone of voice. Slowly and with solemnity, holding before him the Great Chaplet, he rode around the lists again, so that everybody could have a good look; and the other knights followed, two by two.

Giles didn't see a single face, as a face. He acted mechanically, like something that has been wound up. And though his looks and mien were impeccable, his mind was leaping with the realization that now he was rich enough to ride to London Town and fit himself up as became his birth—a squire, four men-at-arms, and mounts and weapons and armor. Then—France!

His expression was exalted as he rode around the lists, holding aloft the Chaplet as though it had been the Holy Grail itself. He must have looked almost sanctified. He was thinking of the new surcoats he would buy.

HE became aware that something more was expected of him. He'd made the complete tour and had come again to the marshals' stand, where he stopped at attention. They were all looking at him. Without being aware of a single face, he sensed this. Something else . . . some other silly business. . . . Oh, yes! He should present the Great Chaplet to the lady of his desire, crowning her Queen of Love and Beauty, or something like that. It was always done. He nodded.

Well, there were plenty of ladies. Marten and ermine and vair, sendal and samite, fluttered before his eyes.

He hesitated not a moment. He turned left. It could as well have been right—it just happened to be left. He rode inside the barrier, along the base of the gallery, for a short distance. Too near the Duke would smell of fawning; too far away would mean a lesser lady, and such a choice might anger the ladies of high degree. About the sixth or seventh one would be safest.

All the ladies were leaning forward. He stopped before the seventh as though she all this while had been his destination.

She was thinnish, though not downright bony, and her hair was dark brown, her eyes green. They were rather lovely eyes. She was not otherwise notable. Her cheeks flamed when Giles reined before her.

She must be young, he reflected as he

leaned over and placed the Great Chaplet upon her head. She looked scared.

"I crown thee Queen of Love and Beauty," he said, and then added in a husky undertone, having all but forgotten it: "And the lady of my desire."

He made a bow, and rode on.

As the day sombered into night Sir Giles stretched out on his pallet and grunted with pleasure. Hal was massaging his legs with oil. Though all his joints and muscles ached, Giles was feeling good. The money had come. He planned to leave Chevron right away, not waiting for the mêlée, the pitched battle, tomorrow, nor the feast that would follow it.

Big as the duke's hall was, it could not be made to accommodate all the knights gathered in their tents and pavilions here on the plain beside the castle, and ordinarily Sir Giles would not have been invited to the feast. It was different now that he had won the Great Chaplet. But he was not going. He would present himself to the duke soon, when Hal had finished working on him, and express his regrets. He was leaving for London.

Hal was glum. Twice his master's age, Hal had been to the wars, the real ones, and he wanted no more of them. He knew what the money meant. He knew that his master would engage a squire, men-at-arms. Hal then would be only a part of the entourage, not, as he was now, the whole thing. There was no longer any spirit of adventure burning in Hal's breast. He felt no impatience with the make-believe wars. In fact, he loved them. He loved the life of the tourneys and its excitement, the moving about, the familiar faces, the booths, the stands, the pomp and ceremony, martial music, flapping pennants, flags—and the beer.

It was all one grand celebration, one glittering holiday. You ate well at such affairs too. Hal right now, indeed, kneading his master's muscles, was thinking of the slices of stag with gravy, the beef, mutton, legs of pork, the swan, the rabbit, the boar's head larded with herb sauce, the roasted teal, and woodcock pies, and capon, and mallard. These things and many others would be served by such as himself—and well sampled first—in the castle tomorrow night. But Hal by then would be traveling supperless toward London Town. It made him sigh.

On the other hand, it made Giles chuckle. Foregoing a banquet was nothing to Giles, no trencherman. Foregoing the mêlée meant more. Since he had taken part in the tilting, was it his duty to participate in the mêlée as well? He had at last decided that it wasn't. Mêlées were dangerous. They gave little chance for the lance-play in which Giles was expert. They were great unorganized brawls. Giles had planned to get himself unseated by the simple process of slipping backward over the rump of his charger at the first shock. But even that would be risky. It would leave him lying on the ground, helpless, unable to move much because of his armor, and likely to be trampled to death. To be sure, Hal would be posted near the spot where Giles planned to fall; but Hal was only one man, and not as spry as he used to be. No, it would be definitely dangerous; and Giles of No Land had decided to avoid it.

Coupled with this decision was his purpose to quit Chevron immediately. For one thing, he would certainly be approached by various knights and barons who would ask if they might place themselves opposite to him at the time of the mêlée. To tilt against Sir Giles, after the events of the afternoon, would mean to gain much honor. It would be difficult—tiresome too—to explain to these men why he would not be taking part in the mêlée.

For another thing, the duke was notoriously hungry for knights. Chevron, what with the wars, was none too well garrisoned. A strapping youth like Sir Giles, who might be married to some propertyless cousin and so fastened with legal fetters to the castle, would be a temptation to the duke. Giles indeed, and especially since he'd won the tournament, had little doubt that he was about to be asked to remain.

That would be worse than the life he had been living! To be, in effect, a servant, a hired bully, a glorified gate-sentry who in off-hours could be used to instruct the duke's offspring in tilting at the quintain—*bah!* Why, he'd as lief be a horse; and in truth such a knight, a mere retainer, would be much like a horse, well stabled and fed because he was useful, but that's all.

He rolled over, and stretched himself with limbs all four ways, starfish-fashion, and grunted again for sheer happiness. He yawned. He picked up the gold.

It was good to have gold. Each coin was a stepping stone to France. He counted them, smiling sleepily.

"Sire," Hal whispered, "a woman is coming."

"I'll have none of her."

"Nay, sire. This is a lady. I see fur on her tippet."

"Eh?"

Giles rose, frowning. There were ladies at the castle; but the plain here, especially with night falling, was no place for them. The varlets and montebanks and jugglers by far outnumbered the knights, and not all of them were sober. Giles went to the tent flap.

YES, she was coming. She was taller than he'd thought—for despite the fact that her mantle muffled her face, he had recognized her instantly. She walked with a rapid, small step, looking down. There was something breathless about her.

"Quick, my underdrawers!" For Giles had suddenly remembered that he was naked. "Get me a bliaut—a clean one, if there is one!"

It was well that he acted promptly, for the lady didn't loiter. She called gently at the flap, then entered. Inside, she stopped. She tossed her head, causing the blood to fall back, exposing her face.

The eyes were lovely, a rich thrilling green, and large. Her hair was dark brown, thick, smooth, and very long, falling in two fat braids to her waist. She stood straight, motionless, yet somehow suggesting a caught bird.

Giles cleared his throat, and motioned to Hal to go. He did not speak until the varlet was outside, and then it was in a low voice.

"You should not have come. What will your husband say?"

She blinked.

"But—I have no husband, sire. Surely you knew that when—when you came to me today—"

"Oh, of course. I mean, what will the duke say?"

"The duke is my cousin. He is pleased about us."

"Oh."

Giles marveled, and also he trembled. How could he ever have guessed that the lady wasn't married? Why, she must have been all of nineteen! And a cousin of the duke, probably a third or fourth one. Penniless, no doubt. If she had any estate at all she would have been wed long ago.

"That is what I came to tell you. I—I can't bring you much, sire. But the duke has agreed to make you captain of the castle guard. That at least I can bring, my lord."

She whispered the title, hanging her head.

"The duke will ask you, at the feast tomorrow night. He will tell all the company about—about us. You will sit by my side, sire?"

Giles waggled his hands. Helpless, he looked at the tent flap. He knew that Hal stood just outside, listening. Hal's own language was the barbarous English, but he'd picked up more than a little French.

A torch flared. There were shouts and some singing. A woman, a camp follower, screamed in affected fright, then broke into giggles. There was a great gust of laughter.

"We will talk about this later. You must go now."

She had listened to too many minstrels. She truly believed all this tournament flumdummery. And how could he explain to her now, how could he tell her, he who was never at best notably articulate? He put hands on her shoulders, there in the dim tent, meaning to try to tell her that he was departing for the wars and had no thought of marriage; but she looked up with a glad, quick half-smile, catching her breath, and he found that he was kissing her.

Presently he pushed her out. Hal was there, of course. Giles sent him for a belt-and-dagger, which he put on over his bliaut. He was nervous—he didn't know why. His hands trembled. He did not look at the lady.

"You shouldn't have come out," he grumbled. "I'll take you back."

They said nothing as they walked through dusk across the plain. Her head was covered again, but it was clear that she was a lady, and some gatherings hushed as she approached. From others she was jeered. Once outside the castle, she was fair game for anybody; and the wonder was that she had reached his tent unharmed. She should have known this. She was a fool, he told himself savagely. Or else, he amended, she had great courage. Or both.

More than once Giles was obliged to snarl and to put his hand on his dagger. He wished he had brought his sword. There was a great deal of drunkenness on the plain tonight. There always was, on a tourney night; but Giles had never known it so bad.

Before a certain tent, near to the castle, some serving men were brawling. Giles and the lady could not see the device on the knight's shield propped against the tent pole, these men being in the way. They tried to avoid them; but one fellow thrust himself impudently at the lady, demanding largess.

"Out of the way, thou beefwitted clod!"

Giles punched him over the left ear, hard. The varlet took a step backward, then fell to his knees. The others stepped away from him. And for the first time Sir Giles saw the shield: Argent, a serpent named *vert.*

"Oh," said Giles.

The tent flap was pushed aside, and Sir Raoul of Ranthill came out. He glanced at the groggy fellow still on his knees. Then, deliberately, he kicked him in the side of the head, knocking him flat. He kicked him two or three more times. The fellow, drunk, didn't stir.

"This is my varlet, Sir No Land," Ranthill drawled. "If you will walk a camp wench dressed as a lady, you must expect such things to happen."

Giles' hand went for a sword hilt that wasn't there; and he cursed.

Raoul sneered. Perhaps he, too, was drunk.

"A great spirit of fight. I make no doubt it will have departed by tomorrow, at the time of the mêlée."

He went back into the tent. The lady put a hand on Giles' arm. With a start he remembered her.

He escorted her to the nearest gate.

"God's grace go with thee," he muttered.

"My lord—"

He had turned away.

Back at his own tent he found Hal harnessing Sam, as he'd been ordered to do. Giles stopped him. They were staying here tonight, Giles told him.

There were three squires from as many knights, and humbly they introduced themselves, setting forth the names and titles of their masters, each one of whom pleaded for the privilege of being placed opposite to Sir Giles at the mêlée on the morrow.

"Take the message back, 'No,' " said Sir Giles. "That post has already been promised."

IT was a brave sight, and one calculated to thrill, when the warriors lined up for the mêlée. They filled the plain with their glitter, their pennoncelles, and plumes. The meadow where the actual fighting would take place stood all empty, receptive: it was as smooth now as a castle floor, every hole having been filled, every rock removed.

Two great barons, de Voudray and Basse, had selected the fighters very much as small boys pick teams for play, though of course with more ceremony. There were thirty-two on each side. Every one was an adubbed knight. No man-at-arms or squire, even though he were gentle, was permitted to join the fray.

The banners were at the two ends of the meadow, bright in the sun, but they hung limp, for there was no breeze. It would be a hot day. The hope had been to get the mêlée started while the night's coolness lingered; but there had been all sorts of delays, and there had been squabbles about precedence and place. It was almost noon

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before everything was ready, and the sun hung low and hot.

Generally, the nearer the banner the more honorable the position. Sir Giles was placed fourth from the de Voudray banner. He owed this to his winning of the Great Chaplet—he would ordinarily have been placed near the very end of the line.

The other side of the meadow, careful to find a place exactly opposite him, his varlets fussing around him, tightening this, resetting that, was Sir Raoul of Ranthill, motionless on his charger, a statue.

That was good. Giles grinned, nodding.

There were to be no rules. They were using ash lances, tougher than the thin easily-splintered tilting lances, but most of the fighting after the first impact would be with swords. An unhorsed knight might fight on foot, if he were that much of a fool. The meadow was going to be no place for a man on foot soon. The mounts themselves, trained war horses, would go mad with the rage of battle.

Far back, on all sides, the peasants watched. Some of them had climbed trees.

Giles glanced along the line. They were almost ready. It was time for his prayer.

With Hal's assistance he dismounted. He went to one knee, and bowed his head and clasped his hands. He prayed briefly. Then Hal helped him to mount again, and he sent Hal away.

Squires and villains from both forces were being sent behind the ramshackle temporary barriers along the two sides of the meadow. They were not permitted any weapons, even daggers, for fear that they might forget themselves in the excitement. Their only function, aside from cheering, was to drag out their downed masters.

A solemn silence came. The banners were shaken out, fold by fold, the three antique crowns of de Voudray, a blue banner near which Giles was to fight, and the Basse besants on a field of red.

The trumpets were sounded, the drums rolled.

"For God and St. George!"

They started slowly, a wavering line, for these were big horses carrying heavy men in heavy armor. Then they were trotting. Then they were at a gallop, all lances set, plumes tossing.

The earth shook under them.

It was the fault of neither man that Raoul Ranthill and Giles did not meet at the first impact. There was no definite order, no one to shout commands, and the knights rode close together. The de Voudray force kept a good line, but Basse's men were out of hand, some far ahead of the others.

Instead of Ranthill Giles found himself riding against a short and amazingly thick knight in black armor, whom he had no difficulty in unhorsing at the first shock. He wheeled Sam with his knees, raising his point a little. The meadow was a turmoil. Dust was everywhere — gritty, choking, brown dust. Men were on the ground. Horses were rearing or were running wild, riderless.

"A de Voudray! De Voudray!"

Giles saw the blue banner, but he did not immediately press for it. He was seeking Ranthill.

A knight with yellow lozenges on his shield rode for him. Giles could not sit and take the full shock; in self-defense he had to start Sam again. He was almost unhorsed. He'd been slow in starting, and the other knight had the advantage. Moreover Giles had not been alert. He cursed himself as he wheeled about.

The other knight, the knight of the yellow lozenges, likewise was wheeling. This time Giles took a firmer seat in saddle, a firmer grip on his lance. He held his shield high. He leaned forward. He blotted from his consciousness everything but the man he was about to meet.

That man went down. He lay still. Varlets hurried out to him, and he was limp when they carried him off the field. Giles of No Land looked around, but he couldn't see Ranthill. It was difficult indeed to see anything. There was fighting everywhere, much of it with swords, and the ground was littered with shattered lances.

"De Voudray! To me! De Voudray!"

This time he did make for the banner, as others were doing. The press was close there, and they reseated themselves and to some extent reformed their line. In a few minutes they had lost at least half of their men.

Before they were properly assembled a group of Basse knights charged them with swinging swords. The fighting was close, and Giles was about to throw away his lance, which hampered him here, when he spied Raoul of Ranthill.

The knight of the green serpent was not pressing the attack. He was outside the

group of Basse warriors who had ridden against those around the de Voudray banner. His lance at rest, he was riding back and forth, squinting through the dust.

Giles pushed himself out of the struggle. A sword struck his left shoulder and spun him half around in his saddle, but he rode on. He never did learn whether that blow was intended for him or was an accident.

RANTHILL saw him coming, and raised his shield in ironic salute, and immediately rode to the far end of the meadow, where there were few men. Ranthill was not running away! He simply wanted room for a charge. He turned. He started promptly for Giles, who, having waited for this, made for him.

It was a shorter course than they would have run in the lists. Even though so many knights were down, there wasn't much room. Nevertheless both chargers were going fast at the time of the collision.

Sam rose on his hind legs and teetered, doing a little dance-step. Stunned, shocked, Giles could not have slipped out of the saddle at that moment. Had Sam fallen Giles would certainly have broken a leg. Sam didn't fall.

They turned. Ranthill was riding at them again. Giles gave Sam the knees.

This time it was poor coursing on the part of both of them. The dust was much to blame. Even the horses seemed unsure of themselves. Wounded knights or villains dragging their masters kept staggering past —some of them seemed to spring from the very ground. The noise was deafening, the dust worse than ever.

Giles escaped Ranthill's lance entirely, but he splintered his own. He knew this as he rode past, though in that instant the dust was such that he couldn't even see Sam.

Yes, the lance was a mere stump. He threw it away. He turned. For some time he couldn't find Raoul of Ranthill. Then he saw the man—on hands and knees.

Ranthill was shaking his head. He was trying to get up.

Giles dismounted and drew his falchion.

Ranthill was on his feet now. He drew. He looked around, and saw Giles, who advanced upon him.

"Good," said Raoul of Ranthill.

Sir Giles of No Land remembered very little about that fight afterward. It was a long one. Neither gave an inch. Each had cast away his shield and used both hands for his sword. Almost every wallop landed full. Giles' ears rang. Sweat or blood, or both, poured down his face. He made no attempt to parry or to duck. He simply stood and swung.

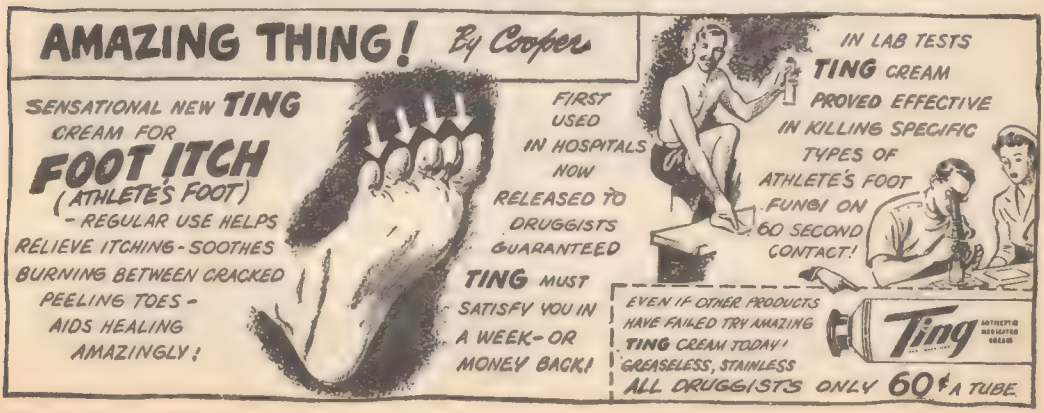
And all the time he was singing. He knew that. He didn't know what he was singing, and of course couldn't hear his own voice; but he could feel his mouth moving, and knew that he was singing at the top of his lungs. He must have been very happy.

Raoul of Ranthill did not fall in a sensational fashion, spread-eagled on the ground. Rather, or at least so it seemed to Giles, he quietly crumbled. His knees bent, then bent a little more. He sagged. He crashed to his knees.

Giles waited, his falchion resting on his right shoulder. Ranthill swayed. Then Ranthill fell forward on his face.

Giles was still singing.

(Continued on page 107)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By
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Escape!

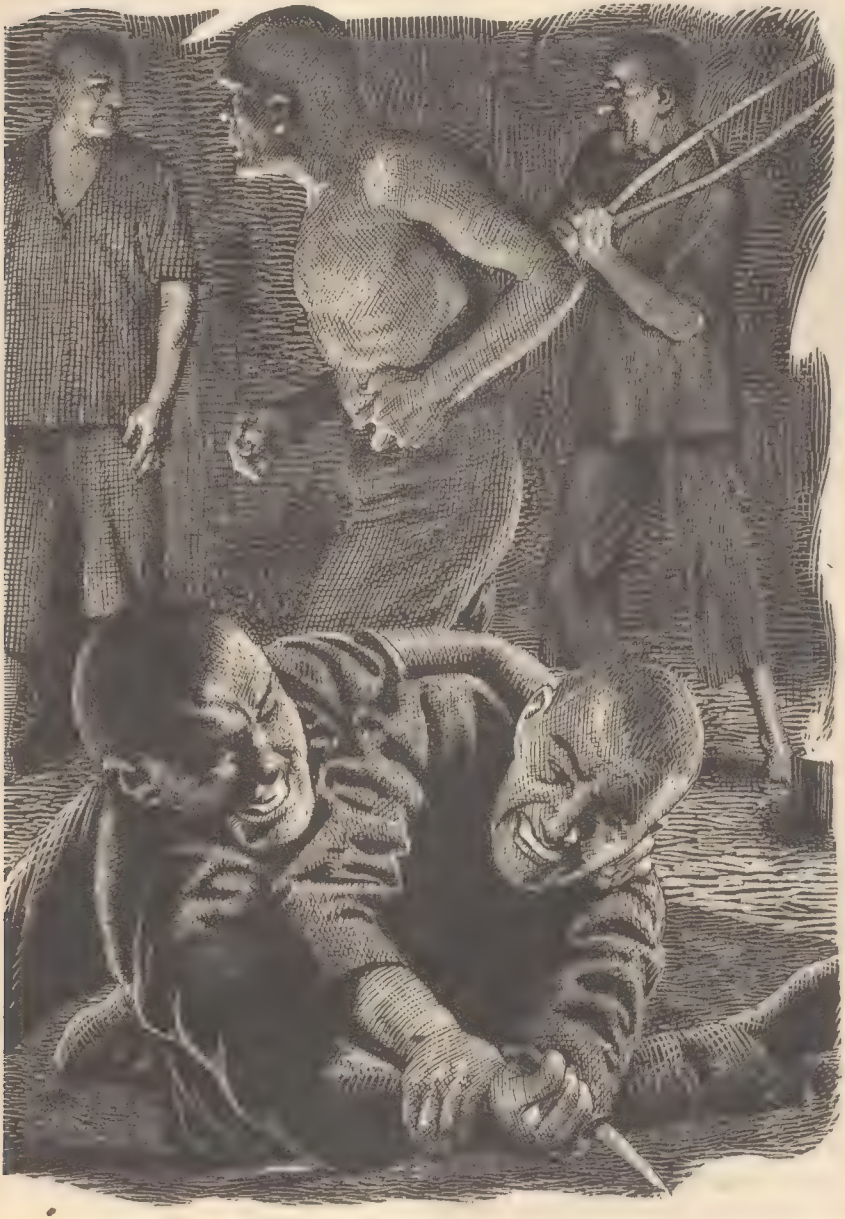
He and Maggia rolled over and over as they struggled for the knife. . . .

A man who swindled Devil's Island for the right to die—for a reason. . . .

THE rusty little steamer from Saint Laurent lay motionless on the dusky sea. Then, with the mail sacks and the contingent of convicts aboard the waiting boat, she got under way again. Peyrot looked at her with narrowed eyes, the old longing for freedom aroused in him. She was headed back to the Guiana mainland where a man had a real chance to escape. But you must wait, he thought, standing there at the end of the roll-call line of the Second Platoon. You aren't ready for another try.

He gave himself to watching the men brought from the ship. The convict boat crew rowed them quickly across the mauve-shaded silver water, the guard at the stern calling the stroke. For an instant the wall hid them from Peyrot's sight, then they were inside and moving towards the barracks. More than twenty men, Peyrot saw, but only one for here. His gaze stayed keenly on that one.

He was young, and quite tall and broad. His face became rigidly tense after the



others swung off to join the First Platoon. It was obvious that he was new on Ile Royale and that in the mainland prisons he'd heard a great deal about the Second Platoon. An impulse to smile came to Peyrot, and then he thought oddly: You weren't at all happy when they sent you on your first visit to the Red Barracks. That's a long time ago, still you'll never forget.

Bertelli, the sergeant of guards, rapped an order as the roll-call finished. The Second Platoon turned and, with the slow, easy shuffle of veteran convicts, entered the barracks door. But Bertelli failed to keep his usual place, inspect Peyrot from head to foot; he had gone instead to search the man who had just arrived. Bertelli's nervous, Peyrot told himself. Things aren't good on the mainland and a lot worse out here. The war's done that. Rations are getting short and the Administration is afraid of a revolt. But revolt, hell. All you want is out on your own.

The swift tropic night had begun to darken the long barracks room. With the closing and barring of the huge door, the overhead lamp was lit. Tonight, though, the tawny cast of light didn't seem to satisfy the men. One by one, their little personal lamps made of condensed milk cans sent up spurts of flame. They're eager to get a look at the newcomer, Peyrot realized, asprawl in his hammock; they're curious to find out if he might take over from me.

Peyrot reached quietly and from the beam above slid the knife into his hand. He tried the blade before he put it in the waistband of his trousers. The new man was young enough, strong enough to be a trouble-maker. Here in this place where the Administration isolated the hardened, malignant core of its most dangerous prisoners, there was a savage rule of leadership. One convict, one alone, held command over them in the Red Barracks. Peyrot had possessed the power for some years past. If he lost a fight in any way, though, the best he could expect was a quick death.

He dropped down from the hammock, stood with his calloused feet spread to the moist coolness of the floor. Maggia watched him, he noticed, and so did the rest of the Corsicans. The thought came to him as he strode along the hammock rows to the newcomer that very soon he'd have to deal with Maggia. The Corsican was tough, bad to meet bare-handed or holding a knife. Around him, too, Maggia was gathering a gang that wouldn't keep still for long. Peyrot grinned slightly. Maybe when that happened he could make use of this man.

"Peyrot," he said. He put forth his hand slowly in a rare gesture. The other stood erect, squinting nervously in the broken flicker of light.

"Duvalin," he told Peyrot, and they shook hands.

Peyrot got back a pace, just to be free to move. "Your first time out?" he asked.

"My first," Duvalin said. His glance ran over Peyrot, the closely shaven skull with its tracery of scars, the deepset, steady eyes, the tremendous sweep of shoulder, back and arm muscle. "You must be top man here."

"I am," Peyrot said simply. "But why did they send you out?"

Duvalin's breathing eased a bit. He lifted his fingers and flicked the sweat from his forehead. "A couple of guys tried for a break with me from the main prison at Saint Laurent. They drowned in the river when the canoe spilled. The Dutchmen caught me and sent me back. I wasn't any good by myself in the jungle."

"That's hard. It's alway hard."

"The Maritime Tribunal gave me two more years. They—"

"I know," Peyrot cut in, having heard the story so many times that his brain refused repetition of it. "We give you new guys a chance to make a few *francs* out here, though. I run a Marseillaise game and tonight we'll rent your blanket and play on it. One tenth of the take goes to you."

"Thanks, *sidi*," Duvalin said.

Peyrot remained unsmiling as he heard the title, not quite certain that the other didn't give it with a trace of mockery. "You served in the Colonial?"

"The Navy," Duvalin said. "They had us stationed for a year or so at Mers-el-Kebir."

"All right." Peyrot felt a sharp sense of impatience. This man was talking to him almost as if he was some kind of father-confessor. To hell with it. He was here to protect himself and nobody else. "We hold the game over in the corner," he said roughly. "When you hear the money box

shake, come on along. Be sure you bring your blanket. Understand?"

Duvalin nodded. "Thanks again," he said.

A CRIPPLED man with a wild, bearded face shook the tin box filled with *sous* pieces. Duvalin got up, took the thin blanket from the hammock, stepped slowly forward. He kept himself from looking directly at the men on either side. He must treat them as he had treated Peyrot, with outward respect. Later, when he had learned the reputation, the strength and skill of each one, it would be different. But even now he could recognize some of the more famous of them as he passed.

This was Chiquepin, who had spent sixteen years in solitary composing insulting poems about the Governor. The next was the one called Bamboo, the last survivor of the old Amiens arson gang. Bamboo was toothless, but the slant eyes were still shrewd in their scrutiny and the gnarled hands nimble on the coir mat he made. Toto was beyond, the enormous Senegalese who years ago had led a mutiny of his *tirailleurs*, and had been saved from a firing squad because of the fact that his father was the sheikh of the Oloff tribe. Toto sat and rocked back and forth on his heels to the music of the cigar box mandolin Cobereau played. Cobereau had been the leader of a Paris symphony orchestra in his time, then been convicted of having murdered his wife out of jealousy.

Duvalin had prepared himself against the fear which began to rise coldly through him. He had been aware that in this place he would meet the very worst of the lot from all the prisons. His own background had toughened him, made him a capable fighter. Still the men here oppressed him with a sensation of dread. There was about them an aura of death, of withheld, incredible horror. The ones he had passed, though, were the least dangerous of the sixty-odd in the barracks. The really desperate were grouped around Peyrot and the bearded convict with the *sous* box and the grimed, cracked pack of cards. Duvalin ran his hands down the sides of his trousers to dry them, then he flexed them and the cords of his wrists. He had to escape, he repeated to himself, and he would be no good in the war if he came out half-blind or maimed.

Peyrot started the game right after Duvalin had spread the blanket. He dealt the cards, as Maggia and three of the Corsicans had taken places. It was usually crippled old Bel-Ami's privilege to deal, but tonight Peyrot had told him to make change, sell cigarettes to the dozen players squatted at the edge of the blanket.

He had been smart, Peyrot decided, to get Duvalin into the game. The man had to be tested, and also this was Maggia's night to try to seize command. He sensed it in the way the big Corsican kept increasing his bets, then flinging down his money when he lost. Maggia was about through with anything like caution. The Red Barracks years had made him a little mad. Now the dark, wild rage in him was going to break loose.

Peyrot sent the cards smoothly out over the blanket. He called the combinations in an unhurried voice and with each deal gave Duvalin the percentage he had promised. Duvalin was winning with his share; he had bought cigarettes from Bel-Ami, passed them around to the men near him. Maggia was the only one to refuse. "Play cards," Maggia grunted. "I smoke my own cigarettes, not that stuff."

Duvalin sat very still, unwilling to answer. Something was happening here that he didn't fully understand. Perhaps it had been a trick of Peyrot's to get him into the game, let him win for a reason that would benefit Peyrot. Anyhow, the Corsican beside him was in a rough mood. There'd be a fight here soon and he wanted no part of it.

Peyrot was dealing again, and a harsh, quick curse came from Maggia. "No good," Maggia said to Peyrot. He reached out to pull back the money he had bet. "The house didn't win that. My cards topped yours."

"But no," Peyrot said, almost softly. "You've thrown in your cards. You didn't show them to match mine. And the guy beside you there—" Peyrot nodded at Duvalin—"saw them and chucked in his own."

Out among the hammocks, the conversation had stopped. Cobereau no longer fingered his mandolin. The sounds were those of a moth dimly butting against the lamp reflector, a faint rasp of palm fronds

outside and the fainter lift and fall of the surf.

Duvalin heard his own breathing as though it were very loud. His body ached with the urge for action, yet he kept himself absolutely motionless. In a moment, he thought, in just a couple of seconds, this will bust wide open. He stared in fascination at Bel-Ami, remembering now that Bel-Ami had been crippled in a fight here. Bel-Ami would never leave Ile Royale. . . .

But don't look at Bel-Ami, he swiftly thought. This Maggia is backing down from fighting Peyrot: The moment's gone. Maggia hasn't got the nerve to go after Peyrot. He'll go after you instead, and Peyrot must have planned it that he would.

DUVALIN very slowly turned, his hands, his body poised. He could see the lewd dancing girl design tattooed on Maggia's left bicep, and as the man heaved around towards him, the line about the throat with the inscription for the executioner, "Cut here." One who's too tough for his own good, Duvalin realized with an inner, steady calm. One who's jug-crazy and doesn't know it.

"You work with Peyrot," Maggia said. "He pays you to lie for him. But get up. Maggia will pay you, too."

The resolve was so great, came from so far in the depths of his nature, that Duvalin was barely conscious of what he did. All he could think of as he wheeled his body, brought his elbow backwards smashing into Maggia's face was that he must live to escape. France needed him. He had to escape to fight for France. . . .

But some instinct of preservation had warned him not to get to his feet. If he did, Maggia would rip him with the cruel little knife the other held. This way, he caught the Corsican off-guard and he had a chance to grab the knife.

He and Maggia rolled over and over across the floor as they struggled for the knife. Maggia kicked him, bit him, but he had broken the other's nose, and Maggia was gagged, weakened by the flow of blood. Duvalin took the knife from him, snapped the blade, then snapped it again, flung the pieces against the wall and stood.

Peyrot and Bel-Ami were facing the three Corsicans. Peyrot didn't show his knife, although his hand was on it, and Bel-Ami had his crutch lifted. The point of that, Duvalin saw through the blur of pain upon his eyes, was as sharp as any knife, and the Corsicans recognized the fact. They were sidling away, dragging Maggia with them.

"Bon soir," Peyrot said in a pleasant voice. "Come back when you like, chums." Then he looked at Duvalin. "Sit down. You're not badly hurt and you're ahead in the game."

It was very difficult for Duvalin, but his hatred was sufficient, and he made himself smile at Peyrot. "You don't pay your help enough. Tonight I worked for you for almost nothing. When I come back, though, I'll get plenty. Understand me, *sidi?*"

Peyrot released his grip on the knife. This was turning out wrong. A number of the men laughed at what Duvalin had just said, and he simply stood here and let the fellow mock him. Somehow, in his thought was the memory of his first fight here, and strangely his own image was confused with that of Duvalin. The tense, tall lad looked a good deal the way he must have in that time; he'd still been pretty much the same Peyrot who was proud to stand out in frant of the regiment and get decorated for what he had done in the battle at Villers-Cotterets. So if he went after Duvalin now, it would be against himself, too. Maybe if he'd had a father he could remember he would be able to explain it. His feeling for Duvalin wasn't anger; what he felt was nearly a kind of tender affection.

But that was rapidly replaced by doubt and alarm. Peyrot knew that he was unsure, mixed up in his head and even a little scared. His mistake had been a serious one —Duvalin was the guy for him to fear, not Maggia. The way Duvalin had fought meant that very soon he might be able to take command, and then. . . .

"All right." Peyrot let the words go rough-edged, motioned to the men still around the blanket. "There's cards, there's money. I'll double anybody's bet." But his hands trembled a bit as he dealt, and he gave the cards to Bel-Ami, went over to his hammock. He lay stiffly, staring upward into the shadows and was grateful for the darkness.

It was easy to figure that Duvalin didn't have any of his sense of doubt. Duvalin

hated him for the way he had been used against Maggia tonight. You're in a bad spot, Peyrot. The young guy is out to get you, and the only question is when he'll try. He's tough. You'll have to fight like hell to keep alive.

The weeks that followed had for Peyrot an endless quality. He had never learned restraint, and always in the back of his mind had been the thought of escape to sustain the patience he needed. Now, though, he had the feeling of being absolutely trapped. It seemed that always he would drag on here, from minute to minute, hour to hour through the enormous vaults of the sun-struck, stifling days.

In the past, by cleverly planned stratagems, he had faked sickness, been taken from the confines of the Red Barracks to the prison hospital on the other side of the island. His last escape had been made from there. Since his return, the commandant had passed a standing order; Henri Peyrot, Matriculaire 44,533 was not to be permitted to leave the quarters of the Second Platoon for any reason. A guard violating this order would be held personally responsible, sent for trial before the Maritime Tribunal.

That had been looked upon in the Red Barracks as a magnificent honor for Peyrot. Few convicts in the history of the penal colony had ever been so much trouble to the Administration. But things were changing because of the war. Before, Peyrot had spent his days and nights with the other convicts of the platoon. The knowledge of common suffering, of sharing the regular life of the group, had greatly helped him, although he had been secretly worried by the meaning of the order.

Now, with the extreme shortage of food because of the failure of the supply ship to arrive from France, the commandant had been forced to relax some of the regulations. The platoon, all except Peyrot, were sent out around the island beyond the wall with guards to gather coconuts, bring in fish and seaweed to supplement their rations. The men laughed and jostled each other at morning line-up; they boasted about the size of the fish they would catch.

Peyrot stayed alone in the barracks. He sat staring at the door and through the bars at the wall. Bertelli, outside the door, grunted and sleepily scratched himself while he kept guard. But the shotgun Bertelli held was loaded, cocked, and he didn't sleep.

You're about to go the same way as Maggia, Peyrot thought. The Corsican can't take it any longer. Peyrot looked down and along the floor watched the column of ants. They went with machine-like precision towards a Morpho butterfly that a vagrant breeze had carried from the mainland. The Morpho had been hurt when it brushed between the bars; it lay on the floor with only one lovely, delicate wing fluttering. The guards will get the Corsican, Peyrot told himself, just as the ants will get that.

He wasn't surprised when he heard the shouts and shots from beyond the wall. He went to the door and asked hoarsely, "Maggia?"

"Maggia," the guard sergeant said. "Stand back from the door, you." The muzzle of the shotgun came around, steadied. "You won't even get as far as the Corsican did."

Peyrot stood back and without conscious thought picked up the butterfly. He stroked the injured wing, making his huge fingers deft and gentle. Memory rose, uncalled and for many years forgotten: He was in his mother's arms and her hand was upon his hair. It was the last memory he had of his mother, and of his father he had none at all. . . .

The butterfly moved both wings and Peyrot smiled. He took it to the door, let it lift brightly through the bars although Bertelli warned him hard-voiced to stand aside. He hardly heard Bertelli. The plan that had suddenly come to him was forming in his brain.

He was lost within the dream of escape. Duvalin was part of it. He would need Duvalin. The plan wouldn't work without the younger man, and a great deal depended on him. Peyrot sat in his hammock, waiting with calmness now for the return of the platoon.

The platoon was in a state of strained, tense excitement caused by Maggia's death. They stood in small groups and talked of how the Corsican had tried to break past the guards, swim out to sea on a banana stem raft he had hidden. Peyrot moved slowly to the group around Duvalin. There was a glare of tremendous emotion in Du-

valin's eyes. His handsome, straight-featured face was pale beneath the tan. "Another few strokes," he said, "and maybe he would have made it. The tide wasn't quite right. But at night—"

"You're wrong," Peyrot said in a flat voice. "No guy can escape like that. The sharks would get him."

Duvalin turned with a gradual motion. He brought his hands up from his sides, and his bare feet were widely set. Here we go, Peyrot thought. The guy wants to escape more than Maggia ever did, more maybe than yourself. He hates you enough, though, to give you one hell of a fight and this is how it has to be.

"Go back to your hammock, old-timer," Duvalin said very quietly. "You're all through."

"Not yet," Peyrot said. He was slipping off his candy-striped cotton jumper, tossed it behind him. "With the hands." He held his out to show that they were empty. "No knives. . . . You called me *sidi* before, but you were kidding. Now you're going to mean it."

Bel-Ami was there, and Toto, Bamboo, Chiquepin, all the veterans. They formed a circle and their linked arms, their bodies made a barrier around Peyrot and Duvalin. A smile passed swiftly across Duvalin's face as he stared at them. "The shore-going sharks," he said. "But you've lost your teeth, and you won't get me." Then he took a sliding step forward, struck at Peyrot's jaw.

PEYROT could tell the length of the fight by the increasing effort to lift his arms. He used the crouched posture he had learned in Africa when he was a new conscript, still too clumsy and eager. Duvalin had been taught somewhere, probably in the Navy, the American fashion of right and left crosses, hooked uppercuts. A couple of those reached sharply through to Peyrot.

He became dazed, bloody and very tired. His concentration wavered with the pain. He had the idea that he was back at Verdun, then in the wild tangle of the smashed forest at Villers-Cotterets. At Verdun, you had the same dizziness from the shelling. But in that wrecked forest you got up, went forward alone with the hand grenades you threw bursting in yellow, terrible bloom over the German machine-gun emplacement. Here, too, you had to stand up and fight.

You must beat this guy. If you don't, you'll never walk along the curving sand of the Copacabana again. You'll never sit at a cafe table on the Silencio and look out at the purple bowl of mountains around Caracas. There'll be no more making love to the soft, gay little girls in Panama.

Hit, Peyrot. Hit to finish it. One way or another, this is your last one. He went in staggering, wide-kneed, and Duvalin met him with a punch straight to the mouth. Peyrot dropped almost to his knees; he groaned. Above him, he could hear Duvalin advancing, and vaguely he saw the other's swinging hands.

Peyrot rose in a swift lunge. He used the top of his skull, drove it between Duvalin's hands and to the point of Duvalin's jaw. The man fell without a sound, Peyrot on top of him. But Peyrot could get up. He was able to stand erect and gaze at them who made the ring.

"Any more?" he said.

That was prison tradition, meant simply that he had won. Tonight nobody would go near him or Duvalin. If he wished later, he could seek out Duvalin, finish anything he thought undone. That also was tradition respected by generations of convicts.

The ring was broken. Bel-Ami threw him his jumper and he wiped his face with the hem. Then, out of sheer bravado, he forced his aching hands to roll and light a cigarette. The smoke was bitter, marvelous.

"Pick him up," he said to Chiquepin. "Put him in his hammock. Leave the water bucket handy. Maybe the guy will need a drink."

"Sure." Chiquepin stooped to lift Duvalin. "He'll need a lot."

Peyrot waited until almost dawn. He lay in his hammock smoking cigarettes and checking over each detail of the plan. Then from the hidden cavity in the beam where he kept the knife he took down the quinine capsules and the fine-bladed little saw. Those were his most precious treasures; years back he had bribed a guard to get him the quinine, and the saw had been smuggled in from the mainland workshops for an enormous price. Used right, they could

mean freedom. But not for him alone. He put them inside his jumper sleeve with the knife, got down from the hammock and went softly striding to Duvalin.

The prison was very quiet. The men slept deeply in these few hours of coolness. Their breathing was a fluttering, hoarse chorus against the rumor of the palm trees and the surf. Moonlight came through the bars of the door, cast their faces in a ruddy glow, made them look like the parts of some lost, tragic frieze. Peyrot studied them in turn, to be certain that they were fully asleep. Then he halted close to Duvalin's hammock; he softly whispered the man's name.

Duvalin was far gone in a desolate region of pain. He heard Peyrot as though from a long distance, still he knew that the other was very near. Duvalin struggled against the pain. A chill sweat broke on him and a tremor went over his body. Peyrot was here to kill him, he thought; Peyrot had waited until now to take final vengeance. But, in the pain, he could hear Peyrot calmly and slowly speaking to him, the words whispered.

"Don't be scared, man," Peyrot said. "I'm not here to knock you off. I want to make sense, talk to you about escape."

"Why?" Duvalin said, unable to say more.

"Because you and I are the only ones who can turn the deal. Listen to me. But first take these, so you'll realize that I'm talking straight—" His hand went out surely in the moon glitter and he gave Duvalin the knife, the quinine, the saw.

Duvalin had the thought that the pain had stripped him of his sense of reality, that he insanely imagined this. But the knife was real, the other things, too. For a brief instant he had tears behind his eyelids.

"I don't understand," he whispered to Peyrot. But he was caressing the saw blade, and in imagination he was with his family again in Normandy. "Why me?"

"You're the only other guy tough enough to make the try. And because of the fight we've had, the guards will never think we would team up together. But watch yourself all the time. The lousy commandant has got his informers in here. They report everything that happens, and we've got to get the deal straight between us now for good."

"What's your reason for wanting to escape?" Duvalin said. He was half upright, the pain forgotten.

"That's a stupid question," Peyrot said shortly, "but guys always ask it. When I came out of the last war, there was no job for me, no place to go. So I pulled a couple of small thefts, just to keep from starving, and they threw me in here. I've got out every time they've put me in, though, and after this break they'll never catch me again."

"I want to get back to the fight for France," Duvalin said. A vibrancy was in his voice and he sat staring wide-eyed at Peyrot in the moonlight.

Peyrot grinned wryly and pursed his mouth as if about to spit. "You a little crazy?" he said.

"No," Duvalin told him. "I got in a jam when I was in the Navy. Some lieutenant gave me a bad report for coming back aboard drunk. I got sore and burned up my uniform and the mattress and all the stuff in the ship's brig. 'Willful destruction of government property' . . . You know the story."

"I know," Peyrot said. "But this fighting for France. Let the Boches have the place. What good has it ever done us? I fought in Africa; I was at Verdun and got decorated after Villers-Cotterets. Now I'm here. Skip such stuff. You're buggy in the head to talk about it."

But Duvalin was gazing off into the moonlight. "The thing is different than it ever was before," he said. "When I was over on the mainland, I got letters from home. France is one great big prison. The Boches are keeping the people just the way you and I are kept here. That's why I want to get back and fight. It isn't anything like the old stuff."

"All right." Peyrot shrugged. "Let's talk sense. You take the quinine and mix it with your cigarettes and in a few days you'll be ready for the hospital with what looks like bronchitis. When you get there, you start to use the saw. The room you'll be in is on the top floor. That's made of wood, and there won't be any other patients around to bother you. Down below is a store-room. In that, stacked in a corner, are the planks they put on the bottoms of the hospital beds. You'll find sheets there, too, and you can pry loose one of the shut-

ter fittings with the knife. Make plenty of rope out of the sheets. We'll need it to lash the planks for the raft and to get over the wall. You're a sailor; make a grapnel hook for us from that fitting for the top of the wall."

"You trust me that much?" Duvalin very slowly said.

There was a silence.

Peyrot shrugged again. "I have to trust you. They won't let me out of here for any reason. But once you're out, you'll need me or some other man to help you get the raft over the wall. The floor in that room isn't thick; you should cut through it in a night or so. The window bars in the store-room are pretty rusty. A couple of hours' work will be enough to take care of them."

"There'll be guards on duty," Duvalin said, his voice taut. "You'll be locked up in this place. How am I going to get you out?"

"They change the guards next week. After midnight, Bertelli will be on duty alone here. Once you're clear of the hospital, hide the raft against the wall and slip across to Bertelli. The key to this door will be on his belt. You can get it from him."

"I don't like to kill a man like that," Duvalin said.

Peyrot smiled. "You don't have to. Put a slip-knot in the end of your rope. Give him enough of the garrotte treatment to keep him quiet. How long do you figure you'll be?"

He waited.

"A week," Duvalin said, the sweat shining on his face. "A week from tonight, right after midnight, I'll be here for you. The tide starts to set for the mainland then and it will be good for us."

"Correct," Peyrot said. He was erect and in the moonlight he stared with a searching keenness into Duvalin's eyes. "We're partners?"

"Yes," Duvalin said. He gave his hand to Peyrot. "We are."

Then Peyrot turned and in cat-like silence went back along the room. Duvalin watched him, his breath withdrawn, the knife, the quinine and the saw closely held. You've hated the man, he thought, but Peyrot's given you freedom. A week from now, wihtout fail, you have to be back here for him. . . .

PEYROT got into the habit of gazing out over the wall during those next days. It helped him, eased the terrific burden of his tension and brought the dreams very near. When the doctor took Duvalin, hoarsely coughing, away to the hospital, Peyrot looked at him for a moment, but afterwards returned his imperturbable gaze beyond the wall.

Across that strip of sea was the mainland, and the mainland meant freedom. It wouldn't be long before he and Duvalin were in some big city where they could safely hide until the police gave up the chase. Then one quick job and he'd have enough money, get himself an apartment, a girl, all the brandy he could drink and all the food he could eat. There was no sense worrying about Duvalin. The young guy would string along all right once they were outside the wall. That talk about France was just prison chatter. A guy got weird ideas after he'd been in the Red Barracks a while . . . .

Duvalin sawed through the last bar in the hospital store-room with the blood running from his raw-chafed hand. But he forgot his hand after he had slid out the pile of planks, dropped to the ground beside them. It was raining, the drops huge and heavy, and he could hardly see across the courtyard to the Red Barracks. Then, he thought, it meant that he was unseen here, could go ahead and carry out his promise, free Peyrot.

He took four or five turns of the sheet-rope from around his body, put a slip-knot in the end as Peyrot had told him. A great, warm feeling of affection for Peyrot came to him once more. He would be forever grateful to the old-timer; after all that had happened, Peyrot had put implicit faith in him, and without Peyrot . . . . But don't waste your time.

Get the man out.

Perhaps Bertelli heard him as he crawled belly-flat through the rain. Anyhow, Bertelli was on his feet, gave a warning shout before Duvalin reached him. Duvalin got the rope over his head, though, hauled the knot hard against the throat, knocked the shotgun away from Bertelli's grasp. Then he knelt, fumbled for and at last found the key.

He had seen the door opened hundreds of

times, knew how it worked. Peyrot was right inside, sprang forward at once to join him. "The guy yelled," Duvalin told Peyrot. "I wasn't fast enough. But the raft's down by the wall."

"Don't talk," Peyrot said. "Let's get the hell out of here."

They ran stride for stride to the wall. There were lights showing in the guards' quarters and men called out in the rain. Peyrot cursed beneath his breath. This was going to be a very close deal. But they were at the wall; Duvalin had uncoiled the rope, tossed the grapnel hook up to catch on the top.

"Go ahead, old-timer," Duvalin said. "I'll send up the planks."

"You first," Peyrot said, "so you can start making the raft."

"No." Duvalin's voice was filled with emotion. "You've risked a lot more than I have. I owe at least this much to you. Go ahead."

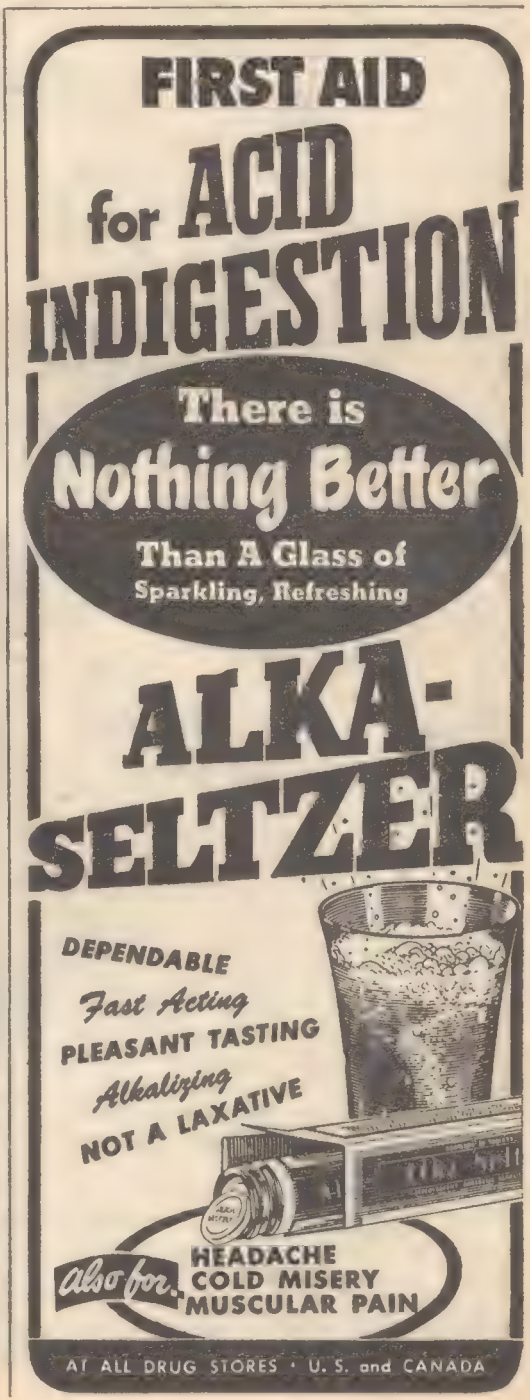
Peyrot glanced back in the rain. The guards were coming. He could see the glint of light on the revolver and shotgun barrels, hear Bertelli's voice. It was strange, he thought, the strangest thing in his life, but he didn't want to go up over the wall.

Looking at it now, he suddenly understood why.

Each time he'd been brought here again, deep down in him he had been happy to be inside the wall. Outside, it wasn't just one quick robbery or stick-up. It was another, and another, because for a man like him there was nothing else to do. And this time Duvalin would be with him, fully trusting him, held to him by the friendship that had grown between them. But Duvalin had to go and fight; he could change his name, join the Free French forces. What was it that Duvalin had said? France under the Boches was a great big prison. That was no good at all.

He wished that he had time to pat Duvalin on the shoulder, even embrace him as a father would a son. But there wasn't time. He had to be content with an image of Duvalin advancing through the woods at a place like Villers-Cotterets, or on the deck of a ship, firing round after round into the Boches who held the beach.

"I've been here before," Peyrot said. "You have to go ahead." His arms grasped Duvalin under the knees. He sent Duvalin vaulting up over the wall and tossed the planks beyond it. Then he turned around, his hands swinging wide to meet the rush of the guards through the heavy-falling rain.



I didn't know what hit me, but I was driven twenty feet. . . .

BLOOD of the SHIP

By
CAPTAIN
JOHN VIGOUR

MR. CUNLIFFE brought old-fashioned wind-ship ideas aboard the *Minerva* when he came to replace Mr. Seymour, who got command of the *Hermes* because Captain Sayle was knifed by a Dago stevedore in Rio. Our skipper, Captain Craddock, was weak as water and left the running of the ship to whichever first mate happened along.

Most of Mr. Cunliffe's growth had gone to his fists and feet, neglecting his head, which was on the small side, and lacked anything of a forehead, like a Barbary ape. That was the impression I got when he first reported aboard—he reminded me of a gorilla I once saw breaking down the bars of

H.E.Fyles

its cage. There was a sort of leashed fury in his malformed body as if the worst devils of hell were fighting it out inside him. Oh, yes, he was a bucko man-killer, make no error—a low-browed slugger with as much reason as a mad bull owns.

We'd hardly dropped the outward pilot—we were bound through Magellan to Callao—when the new first mate went into action.

He took a rabid dislike to Lewis, the fo'c'sle giant who was just a hunk of happy good nature. Lewis' clowning had kept the whole ship even-tempered during the outward voyage; the afterguard tolerated his high-jinx because of the good influence he was for'ard. Mr. Cunliffe didn't tolerate him any more than the average sailorman likes rats or Yellow Jack.

First time Lewis started to sing—he had a grand voice—the mate pitched a belaying-pin at him, and hit him. It was an iron pin, at that. It split Lewis's face from temple to chin.

"Try that, you hell-fired nightingale!" snarled our Mr. Cunliffe. Lewis stood there by the for'ard winch all agape, the blood making pools around his feet.

"And swab up that dirty mess you're making!" went on the mate. "Or I'll rub your so-and-so face in it till you do!"

Some of the others of the deck-boys growled, and that fetched Mr. Cunliffe down the bridge-ladder like a bromleykite pouncing on a dead Chinaman.

"What you perishing swabsters need is a bit of Western Ocean stuff," he raged—a savage man, seeing red.

We didn't understand then what an out-and-out tyrant he was to become, so changing the once happy *Minerva* into a hellship. He charged at the bewildered Lewis and smashed one of those terrible fists, as big as a ham it seemed, into his mutilated face. Lewis dropped into the scuppers. Mr. Cunliffe picked up a deck-scrubber and came sailing into the rest of the deck gang, using it like a flail. He had us cowed in thirty seconds—mass fear, I'd call it. We'd been kind of half-civilized before this rumpus broke out—weren't used to the bucko game.

I saw his two terrible fists were scarred all across the knuckles, as if he'd been trying to maul mad tigers. It didn't look too good to me, not after seeing Lewis flattened out that way—there was all the power of a pile-driver behind his slogging hits.

Just then along came Jensen, the big Swede fireman, and he was another joker of Lewis's kidney.

"Is this a private fight, or can anybody get in?" asked Jensen, a man who could juggle with a two hundred-pound beef cask as if it were a woman's shopping basket.

"Get down to your clinkers, you black squad washout!" fretted Mr. Cunliffe. "I fought three rounds with Dempsey, and he didn't make a profit from it."

"Put that scrubber away and make me go below," invited Jensen. He wasn't any longer the port fo'c'sle joker; he was grim as a bulldozer.

Cunliffe swung at him and the scrubber snapped on Jensen's shoulder. The husky fireman came in fighting, but he hadn't a cat-in-hell chance from the outset. Jensen had some ideas of fair play; Cunliffe hadn't. He used fists and feet as he pleased, but mostly his fists. He was like the tail-end of a tornado.

"Pick him up and sling him into the bunkers!" stormed the mate, shaking his dripping fists. "Anyone else got a complaint?"

No one had. We'd as soon have tried argument with a mad bull. He looked like a mad bull, believe you me; head lowered, eyes bloodshot and threatening. We did as we were bid, and cleared the wreck. When chance came we talked a lot about what we'd do, but we knew, while we talked, nothing would come of it. We were beaten men.

"This ship's due for a change," bellowed the mate. "I'll make you jail scum wish you'd chosen hell for preference." And we'd been decent men until then—as decent as a ship's crew can be.

I saw Georgio, the Greek, putting an edge on his sheathknife in the dinner-hour.

"You'll get nowhere with that," said I. "Killing's murder and men swing for it."

"Lewis is my buddy!" said the Greek. "Wait till a dark night comes!"

But he put the knife away.

A BLOCK carried away aloft next day. It missed Cunliffe, standing on the main-deck, by an inch—if it had registered it would have cut his skull wide open. No one was up aloft at the time, but Georgio

had been given a job up there the day before. It might have been pure accident—blocks have carried away before with no one to blame; but it happened that way. Mr. Cunliffe blamed the crew and started in to teach us where we belonged.

He was breeding murder amongst a gang who'd been amiable and good-tempered until he came to curse the decent *Minerva* with his nastiness.

"We can't do a thing," I told them in the fo'c'sle. "He has us every which way. The law's on his side, and he's the kind who'll shelter behind the law if things don't go his way."

"Did the law do this?" asked Lewis, touching the bandages the steward had strapped around his lacerated face. Doctoring him was the captain's job but our skipper left such matters mostly to the mate and steward and Lewis wouldn't let the manhandling Cunliffe do a thing to him.

Lewis wasn't going to sing and lark any more. He brooded against the unfairness of everything, and I've seen men go warped like an old rope before now. There's nothing like injustice to bring the devil in us to the top.

"One fine night," said Lewis, "some fine bucko's going to walk the plank, or I'm the son of a Dutchman!"

Cunliffe kept us too busy to do much grousing, though. The man was like a flash of lightning; he seemed to be everywhere at once—even when he was below, we got a feeling he was watching us, noting down the details for further action.

The second and third mates played up to him, as who could blame them? They had their future to think of, and Cunliffe could do a lot about such futures, on account of his seniority. All we could do was suffer—and we did overtime at that.

He had the ingenuity of the devil in making work-up jobs of the nastiest kind. He jeered at Mr. Seymour's slackness, as he called it, in putting an eyewash polish on superficials and neglecting the real things that mattered. He had us drag up the cables out of the lockers and scrape and chip and polish them until they shone like silver; and that wasn't play-work, if you get me, since everything was done by hand. He sent tried old men down to clean out the bilges, and if it got rainy and blowy, he pushed us below to clean up the deck-beams. Everything movable below was got up and restowed after the peaks and lazarette had been scoured down to the bare steel.

And always those killer fists of his were busy, until there wasn't one of us but had some punishment to grieve over. We looked as if we'd been through a finishing school for heavyweight bruisers!

Then he found fault with young Jerry Mayne, the ship's boy; as nice a kid as ever trod a deck-plank: a willing kid, as eager as a terrier to do right by such as paid his wages and filled his dinner plate. He was the ship's pet—we old-timers wished we'd got a son like Jerry; we'd get sentimental over him and such of us as had a bit more learning than others would take him in hand to teach him those things that help a boy to become an officer—and a good officer at that.

The way the kid reacted would have made any right-thinking man happy. But Cunliffe wasn't a right-thinking man. He saw Jerry bungle a job, and he dropped from the bridge in half the time it takes a man to fetch a breath. Jerry was a lightweight and had small hands, though he was never dainty in using them for the work that was put in his way. Cunliffe grabbed him, lifted him over his head, slammed him to the deck—a kid, mark you! He was showing off, backing up his bucko boasts.

"Why, Mr. Cunliffe, sir—" said Jerry, getting up and wiping the tears out of his eyes. He hadn't been used to manhandling. Maybe we'd let him have things too easy. "Why, sir," expostulated the boy, "it's the first time I've been set to do a bit of work like that—"

"Answer me back, would you?" yapped the mate. Lewis, shaken as he was, went in to interfere when the punishment got too bitter and ugly. It wasn't fair—and that wasn't all of it. As nice a kid as Jerry being put through the hoops that way was as ugly a business as ever I've seen or heard of.

"Take it out of me if you must," said Lewis; "but leave that boy be, you hulking swine!"

It was then we saw what a two-fisted man was capable of doing. The mate kicked Jerry away and crouched, for all the world like a gorilla readying for a spring. His breath came heavily, and his face was purple and ugly.

"You again!" he said.

He went for Lewis like a mad tiger, kicking, hitting, butting, fighting any way that came into his warped mind, but fighting, mind you—fighting. Lewis did the best he could against that craziness but it got him nowhere. The mate tied overhand knots in him before he called to us others, who were trying to get together to rush him, to take the wreckage away.

With Lewis stowed in his bunk, we put our heads together and decided to go interview the captain, who hadn't so much as showed his face on deck during the whole of the rumpus.

"If he hadn't have touched the boy, we might have stuck it," we agreed. "Old-timers can take their gruel, but with a kid like Jerry—"

We'd made up our minds to jump ship first chance we had, anyway—she was a living hell by this time. It might mean sacrificing a chunk of pay and the risk of being jailed as deserters, but we were prepared to stand for that—if only for the sake of getting the mate in wrong with the owners and agents. But something had to be done immediately, so we started aft to the captain's quarters in a body. All we wanted was common justice.

BUT Mr. Cunliffe was waiting for us up on deck. He looked uglier than ever. He had his hand shoved deep into the pockets of his reefer—we had run into colder weather by this time, making up for Magellan—and the bulges there showed he was loaded for bear.

"And what might my handsome deckboys be after?" he roared at us.

"Justice," said I, shoved forward into the lead by the others. "We claim our rights to speak with the captain."

"I've watched you for a long time, Jennifer," he growled, "and you can take that for a start!"

I didn't know what hit me—it must have been both his fists at once. I blacked out. Thinking it over later I didn't see how Jack Dempsey could have stood one round against them! My messmates told me I was lifted and driven best part of twenty feet from my stance, and I weigh a clear two hundred and ten pounds. There was more than flesh and blood in those maulers of his; there was a kind of crude science and the cunning of all the monkeys whose blood runs in man's evil veins. But when, so they told me afterwards, the others tried a rush and hoped to corner him, and get by to the captain's quarters, Mr. Cunliffe lugged out a couple of guns—big Navy Colts—and fired each of them once over their heads.

"Any man tries tricks, he knows what he'll get," snapped our tormentor. No one tried anything, but the snap of the shots finally fetched Captain Craddock out on deck.

"Something wrong, Mister?" he bleated, clinging to the rail as if his legs had lost their bone-structure.

"Nothing I can't handle, sir," roared back the mate. "Leave me to handle the scupperlugs!"

"Don't be violent," moaned the captain. "I detest violence, as you know!"

Then he scurried away and got below, to his favourite companionship, I fancy—the grog bottle that was his weakness and that had sapped away such manhood as he started life with.

"You heard, my wastrels?" asked Cunliffe. "No violence! Don't let me see any of you try to start any such, or—"

It grew worse after that. You'd think it couldn't have got worse, but by the living hookey, it did. We were out in open sea all this long while, with nothing to interfere and no other ship sighted by us, to which we might make a complaint.

His bitterness towards young Jerry grew. Hitherto, the kid had escaped his notice, in a fashion, as if he were beneath his contempt; but now there weren't bad enough things to be done to him. He seemed set on destroying a harmless youngster's soul: He sneered at him, made a mock of the lad's decentest ideas. Any old salty man will understand how it was done.

One night, as eight bells sounded, Jerry didn't report for the usual muster. No one thought a lot about it except that maybe the kid had overslept in his bunk, after a hard day's hazing. But with daylight we found out the truth—Jerry's quiet, orderly soul hadn't been able to stand the untidiness of life as Mr. Cunliffe seemed to like it to be lived. He'd found a length of point-line and a hook in the deckhead, and there he was—beyond all further fret.

I swear the canvas in which he was laced up was wet with tears before ever it touched the water overside!

After that, a spell of quietness struck the ship, as if even our tormentor had had enough; but it didn't last long. Standing at the wheel o' nights, I'd see the mate admiring his outsize fists—they were uglier than ever by this time—and I felt there was still worse mischief brewing. Those fists were itching for action; I could tell it by the way he flexed them and tightened the muscles—for all creation like a wild beast jungle readying its paws to rend and rip.

Maybe he thought he'd drive all hands crazy—though the chief engineer had told him to lay off the black squad or he'd know the reason why—so we couldn't seek reprisals when the ship reached port. I don't know the thoughts that went working on behind that low, corrugated forehead. He always spoke to me as if I were some mongrel left lying in a gutter, and I didn't dare show any resentment. I, who'd once prided myself on being at least half a man was now just a tail-wagging cur—and scared.

He was thinking up new deviltries, I reckon. One morning he put them into effect. It was a fine sparkling day—cold, yes, but still as bracing as a drink on shore.

"We'll have the strongbacks lifted out of the hatches," he ordered, "and we'll do a bit of real cleaning up."

The *Minerva* didn't carry a boatswain as such; the third mate did his bit in keeping the crew active, until Mr. Cunliffe took that job over on his own account. But when we stripped the hatches off the main hatchway we found manpower wasn't enough to lift out the strongback—a solid piece of tempered steel made to stand up to the weight of uncountable tons of water as it threshed aboard in a big seaway. Mr. Cunliffe saw us struggling and came down to the maindeck to make himself the usual nuisance. We tried again, but that strongback wouldn't shift a fraction—it was rusted home until it was like a solid chunk of the ship herself.

"Don't stand around like a pack of paper-backed sheep!" thundered our affliction. "Rig a winch, you slobs—get a hook under the blasted gadget and rip it out. There's no watch below for any man until that strongback's out on the deck, and scraped to the brightness of a diamond!"

Georgio the Greek started up aloft to get the derrick span adjusted.

"Down on deck!" yelled Cunliffe like a blast from a furnace. "We want nothing dropping on our heads. One of you others do that job!" I saw the Greek's hand go 'round to his sheathknife. From the rigging he could have thrown that knife fairly into Cunliffe's extended throat. I wouldn't have

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been surprised to see it happen—like the rest of us, the Greek was hazed silly. But the hand came away as Mr. Cunliffe ripped a belaying-pin from the rail and hove it—and he was a good heaver.

I went aloft to fix the span; the derrick was hove up, and the wire cargo rope was overhauled, with its weighty hook. Lewis, the half-healed scar on his face looking red and angry, put the hook under the lower edge of the strongback. Coming down from aloft I went to drive the powerful cargo winch that could lift a twenty-ton load with no more trouble than if it was a sack of shakings.

"Take the strain!" rasped the mate, and I did just that. You don't put too sudden a weight on a wire rope if you've seen odd things happen by doing just that. And the strongback refused to budge; it was frozen into its sockets. Steel sometimes behaves like that.

"Give it a jolt, blast your eyes!" roared Cunliffe. I slacked back on the wire, started the winch ahead, gave a jerk. Nothing happened. The wire stayed taut as a harp-string, the strongback refused to budge. I tried it more than once.

"Flog the ends with a maul, you scrim-shankers!" blazed Mr. Cunliffe, going his usual purple. Two men picked up heavy hammers and struck the necessary blows, with no more effect than if they'd kissed the hard-locked steel.

"It's you—you there at the winch!" bellowed Cunliffe, though I was doing my best. "You're scared of the damnation thing!"

I tried again, putting a heavy strain on the wire. I slacked back to repeat the jolting process; and still that rusted thing stuck fast. Let the men with the topmauls hammer away as they would, nothing would start.

"I've got to start in to do it myself!" raved Cunliffe. He did just that. He belted me away from the winch, and took over throttle and brake himself. "You do it this way," he said, and it was like steam escaping. "This way, you slob! You don't need to be scared of a wire rope the way you're scared of me!" He slacked-back on the fall, he reversed and set the winch-barrel spinning. He took the strain and more. That wire hummed as if a giant had plucked it.

"Something's got to go!" fumed the mate.

It was cold weather; and wire rope can be tricky. Just where the flaw was we never found out. It wasn't likely anyone had trifled with it—a deckhand usually acted as winchman. But that wire fall snapped like a pack-thread. It parted in the overhead block, where the nip was keenest.

I saw Mr. Cunliffe throw up his two hands—those terrible, man-mauling hands—as the released wire snarled back. And then—it happened in a flash—the mate of the *Minerva* had no hands. No hands at all. The flogging wire had acted as neatly as a surgeon's knife. There were just two sawn-off stumps, nothing more to show—red, ugly stumps—and above them a face that registered sheer incredulity.

"I guess the ship don't like the bad name he give her!" said the Greek. But no one but myself heard him, likely enough; all hands were looking at Mr. Cunliffe. And Mr. Cunliffe was looking at where his hands had been—the hands that had worked a lot of mischief in their evil day.

He saw his boasts were just like water—he saw he was no longer any good—he was just a futile derelict of a man, as useless as a broken bottle. He stared again at the stumps. Then he let out a yell that was a howl of terror as well as a cry of pain. He ran to the side, stepped on a bollard, and leaped overboard. He saw no future for a two-fisted man without his fists.

Cold weather or no, the sea around showed more than one triangular fin, and the swirls that accompany busy sharks. But, as it happened, it was Lewis, the man who'd been worse treated than anyone aboard, who doffed his jacket and went in after the demented man. He got him, too, and by dint of furious splashing, kept the sharks at bay until the ship was stopped and a boat lowered out.

Mr. Cunliffe was hauled aboard in a bowline. It maybe that some of us remembered how young Jerry looked, swinging under the fo'c'sle head. I know someone laughed. Maybe there was more than one. Maybe it was the ship herself—as if she saw a return to the old decent life that had ruled aboard until that two-fisted bucko came to spoil the party!

I do know that the strongback lifted clear by hand-power alone the next time we tried it.

Famous Military Corps

5. THE CUIRASSIERS OF ALEXANDER

IN A PREVIOUS article the name and fame of the Macedonian Phalanx has been told, but while not so well known the Cuirassiers of the Macedonian armies were the striking force that opened the way for the Phalanx.

In the ancient world the cavalry arm of a force was generally light irregular horsemen. The Macedonians first, and Hannibal 150 years later, used heavy cavalry as a striking force and their battles were won by the use of this arm. It is a curious fact that after the Punic Wars the Romans never developed their cavalry, and, until the rise of the Eastern Empire, cavalry was little thought of in the Roman array.

The heavy cavalry or Cuirassiers of Alexander were recruited exclusively from Macedonia and Thessaly. There were two brigades of 1500 men each. The Macedonians acted as the King's guard but the Thessalonians were fully as good troops and together they could ride over any infantry line. The men were all picked specimens, clad in complete armor, and their horses were also sheathed in mail. Remembering that there was little fire power of arrows or javelins at this stage of history; these horsemen must have arrived at their point of impact almost unharmed and it is no wonder that they rode over the opposition.

The Cuirassiers were armed with a lance and a heavy sword. They did not hold their lances couched like a medieval knight or a modern lancer. A cataphract held his long spear overhand, thumb to the rear. The weapon was wielded like a twelve foot dagger and when charging a shield wall the spear would be lifted at the last moment and thrust into the opponent's throat or face.

At Arbela, the greatest of Alexander's battles, the Cuirassiers particularly distinguished themselves. After the death of Alexander, the Cuirassiers, like their comrades in the Phalanx, reverted to the status of militia. Hannibal revived the use of regular heavy cavalry and this arm was revived in the armies of the Eastern Empire.

The Cuirassiers appeared in the armies of Napoleon I and III without the lance, and their last charge in history was at Wörth, during the Franco-Prussian War, when they were shot to pieces in a village street to cover the retreat of the French army.

By

HOWARD R. VOIGHT

TERROR BORN

By

VERNE

ATHANAS

THE snow kept coming down stealthily, silently, inevitably as death—soft feathery flakes early in the day, and then the finer, colder, grittier particles as the day wore on. Up in the saddle of Grizzly it lay an even six feet deep. Here, a thousand feet lower, perhaps two feet. And still it floated remorselessly downward.

The cat moved reluctantly. Graceful as a snake and soundless as a bird in flight normally, the belly-deep snow hampered her and annoyed her. She was hungry, for herself and for the demanding life within her.

She limped. In a heedless charge, she'd planted her right forepaw on the burned spike that was all that was left of a sapling; a spike as long and thick as a man's finger and burned to a needle point. The doe had gotten away.

A week's hunting, it had cost, when the hurt cut at her until she snarled and snapped at the streak of fevered fire that ran clear up into her shoulder. Now the wet cold of the snow bit at it again. The snow was here and the deer were gone before it, and she'd had one half-grown rabbit to feed her relentless hunger, the past three days.

She shook the tickling snow from her ears and opened her mouth in a soundless cry of protest, took three flowing leaps with back high-arched and long tail with its black tip whipped well up out of the snow —she made perhaps forty feet in the three

An Epic for Hunters

She caught the first unwary one that came boring in alone. . . .

leaps before she took up her disdainful prancing walk that lifted paws out of the clinging stuff. The febrile pain had done this to her. She would never have permitted herself to be caught thus, had her ancient weather instinct been able to work.

Through the fog of snow a ghost shadow came. She caught the first flick of the motion from the corner of one slant eye and froze immobile in that instant, as the grouse slid past on stubby, silent wings and flurried in to land in the soft fluff.

The grouse hurried to the shelter of low-hanging fir boughs, treading the fluff underfoot easily with the spicules grown for just this between his toes—nature's snowshoes of horny skin, to be shed with spring and rain.

The great cat let herself down into the snow with no more motion than melting ice. Not so much as a hair twitched to dislodge the steady silent fall that began with numb patience to blanket her. Only her eyes moved, jet black against her soft tawny face. Twice her throat worked gently to swallow the steady runnel of saliva off her gums.

The grouse cock harked alertly under the weighted fir, stiffly erect, head flirting to and fro to sound the air and to allow the beady little offset eyes their widest scope of vision. Then with conviction that came as quickly as alarm, he relaxed and tidied himself with prim little darts of his stubby beak, flirting the few spangles of snow from his ruff with dainty twists and shrugs.

The cat slid through the white like an eel through water, easing the fluff back past her shoulders so smoothly that the new-fallen stuff on her back was not disturbed.

The cock picked at the bark, taking the little dried bug casings and sweet gum, hitting one little windfall of red aphid-like growths under a dropping cluster of needles. It was a disappointing harvest, though, and soon exhausted. He shrugged his ruff once more and stepped out.

He pranced daintily, his snowshoes sinking in the powdery drift. He crouched to launch, and the cat leaped.

She was only a blur of motion to the cock, but survival was burned deep into the nerves that linked his body. His wings whacked into the snow and lofted him; caught clear air and took him up, driven with every brutal ounce of strength that his spasmed adrenals could give them. The cat came up before him, matching his loft with her leap, rearing on hind legs with forearms spread and paws splayed and talons hooked into needle-tipped grapnels.

The cock whipped himself off on one wing in mid-stroke, and the cat lashed out, eight feet from the ground with the reach of that clawed forepaw—and missed.

The still-stiff and unstretched tendon of that right foreleg betrayed her, and one eager claw hooked only slightly in the exquisitely layered feathers of the grouse cock's breast. It staggered him in his flight, pulled him down in a sagging line, and the cat wrenched herself cruelly aside, trying to pull herself out of her uncompleted leap. Then she went down in a puffing explosion, full length on her side in the snow.

The cock caught himself in two quick wing whips and bored away into the falling haze. The cat lashed violently onto her feet and heard the diminishing machine-gun burst of his noisy flight. Her jaw sagged and trembled with her disappointed hunger. She squalled then, in a deadly anger that was past caring, and the ready-running saliva made two soft spats on the snow as it fell from her opened mouth.

She wheeled away, alternately leaping and slogging, hating the snow, ignoring the leg, working always with sure instinct for the lower land and abated snow. She dozed perhaps an hour that night, backed into the gunbarrel of a rotted-out windfall trunk, but her hunger and the persistent warning of still-falling snow drove her on. The leg was still stiff.

THE wind was raw, and there was little shelter to the bank overhang. But the land was open here, out of the snow, and her native distrust of the glaring nakedness of day kept her where she was. She licked at the sore tendons of the leg and let her eyes narrow to sleepy slits. The hunger clamored within her, and her lips writhed back in an automatic soundless snarl of protest, occasionally. But she did not stir abroad until dusk had blurred the stark outlines of the leafless oaks below.

She still-hunted, working upwind in a flow smooth as running oil, quartering from ridge to ridge across the little draw. Twice

life stirred within her, and the hunger deepened. The fever had burned fat off her that she could not spare, and now her ribs stood out like rope lashings above her distended belly.

Her marvelous scent-sense ranged the chill wind, projecting her knowledge in a great arc upwind, orienting her with certainty to things far beyond vision or other, duller senses.

The scent came to her now, sweet and thick and hot; and unerringly her senses sifted and classified it. Horse, female—horse, male but not-male, gelding. Man—residual, not present, clinging with the horse smell—colt, very young, three of them. Long narrow wedge-shaped heads and tail like stumpy raveled rope flicking from thin sloping rump, awkwardly skipping on too-small hoofs like up-and-down round blocks of soft and punky wood . . . rich hot smell of living meal cloying the air until her nostrils gorged themselves almost to sickness and the saliva drooled from her soundless gaping jaw.

Like a shadow, paws splayed and eased down on giant soundless pads, eyes slanted upwards at the corners and six inch whiskers fanned in delicate contact with the shifting winds. Lips unconsciously snarled, wrinkling the thick black parenthesis that curved from nostril to lip each side of her muzzle, hot scent engorging the sensitive nerve ends in the nostrils. A stirring of life in belly, the raging, burning demanding, imperative of hunger here, now, to the complete exclusion of everything else.

The shaggy brown range mare was skittish. The hunted ones have their sixth sense too. Or perhaps it was only ancient instinctive knowledge that her new-born was helpless yet, even to the inability of sustained flight, which was as much a part of survival as wide-set eyes that could roll back to see danger from behind. So the mare was uneasy, and she coaxed the little fuzz-tailed youngster close.

The colt nuzzled her shaggy warmth, shivered to the chill of wind sweeping unchecked down the draw, nosed the crisp burnt brown of the winter grass wonderingly, found no nourishment there.

He gangled on stiff stilt legs, stirred to motion by the bite of the wind. The mare whickered anxiously, and he romped teasingly, wanting her to chase him as she sometimes did when he was away from her.

He saw the great leaping blot arching over him, and for a moment curiosity overweighed vestigial instinct, and he froze, round-eyed with wonder—then the ancient inborn relays clicked and the colt spun on awkward stilt legs, and a frightened bleating cry welled out of his scrawny throat. He crossed his stiff-kneed forelegs and went down in a somersaulting roll. A great burning hurt tore through him and he heard from far off the terrified screaming of his mother.

THE cover was poor. Manzanita and scrub oak and scattering sage grew on the sides of the draw, but no ledges overhung here, no heavy trees with outthrust limbs. The cat had kept to the scattered cover, well up from the draw bottom. Had the hunger been less demanding, she might have bided her time longer, to pick some spot for her favorite attack, leaping from above. But the hunger was punishing and immediate, and so she stalked carefully, soundlessly, and when the colt moved of its own accord a little toward her, it was too much for her thin restraint.

Three flowing bounds, she made—eighteen, twenty feet eaten up in each rippling leap—on the fourth and last she bolted high, corded muscular forearms arched wide, paws spread and claws thrust forth, and for a moment the stupid colt stood, eyes bulging in its thin face. And even as she descended, he wheeled, tangled his legs and went over in a sprawling somersault. One paw only, hooked to his bony rump, ripped and sent him in a threshing helpless roll across the floor of brittle burnt grass.

Flight is salvation to the hunted ones. Defense, not offense. Salvation and survival. But in himself, no animal is immortal. Survival is here and now, but survival is in the fruit of the flesh too, along with a sort of immortality.

Deadly fear and the urgent whip toward flight shot through the mare. But it battled with the equal urgency of the fear and hurt in the bleating of the fruit of her own parturition, and even as the emergency circuits linked brain and nerve and muscle into action, purpose was shifted. The mare charged, screaming her anger and fear and outrage, lashing with her puny,

futile weapons at the cunningly-engineered bundle of destruction that was the cat, and the cat, still asprawl from her leap, writhed and coiled, and slapped, almost casually, with one great armored paw.

Hide and muscles and nerve shrank and rebelled to this sudden brutal ripping, and four rough furrows sprang into life down the mare's shoulder and across her chest, furrows that seeped and filled and overflowed almost on the instant, so that as she reared she tore loose of her own effort and the thick red of her blood shook out into a dancing little circle that fell with less speed than her lunging hoofs on suddenly stiffened forelegs.

Arden Winelees had shod the mare, almost a year before. Cold-shod her with light shoes, for she had tender feet. They were worn now, the iron shoes, and one was lost off the left rear, but now the forefeet came down with all the mare's eight-hundred-odd pounds behind them, and one struck the bunched shoulder muscles of the cat, and the other hit and glanced on the tough, round bony structure of the snarling head. Bone crushed under iron, and tawny fur and hide peeled free under the remorseless blow. The cat squalled and rolled and clawed viciously at the air.

The blood scent was in her nostrils now, and the heedless fire of battle. She had no doubt—no thought, really. The blow had shocked her little brain into retreat, and the cat lashed about now in sheer reaction, and again the mare took a clubbing slash that might have opened her up if it had hit fairly. But there was little sense in the mare's own body now, and she wheeled, her rump sagging above coiled muscles, eyes rolled far back so that the whites showed in great halfmoons in the darkness.

The cat lurched, and the mare drove those coiled haunch muscles, drove her hind hoofs in a double smashing blow that lifted the cat and flung her end over end, raging and snapping and clawing, pawing with one thick forearm at the hurt the kick had completed. The first lunge of shod hoofs had splintered malar bones and sinus; the smash of rear hoofs splintered lower fang and grinder teeth, jolted the jaw hinge almost out of the socket. The cat was completely blind on that side now, shocked and hurt and fuddled, and she rolled and lashed and screamed, and her frenzied claws tore at sod and air with equal impotence while she threshed and cavorted senselessly.

The other horses had stampeded in their first panic. Among them, in concerted effort, they could have finished this thing now, had it been their nature. Perhaps the mare could have done it alone, had she the killer instinct, for the cat was all but helpless. But the senseless flopping of the great lithe body was away from the immediate scene, and the colt was laboring up, still voicing its hurt mewing bleat, and the mare crouched on trembling legs and rolled her bulging eyes, with fear and panic again driving her muscles toward flight.

She gave her colt a scared nicker, and nuzzled him. He reared up on forelegs and folded hams, came halfway up and fell—bleated again and again essayed arising, and this time his numbed hams worked and held him. His stubby frazzled rope of a tail flipped wildly, and he nearly fell again trying to nose at the hurt of his rump, but the mare butted at him with a driving urgency, and swung her own rump between him and the dim, convulsed bundle that was the cat yonder in the gloom.

She got him moving, and followed, sidling and prancing, swinging her head first to one side and then the other, with eyes rolled far back to catch the last visible movement behind. She broke into a shambling trot, herding the colt with her anxious heckling muzzle. Her haunches quivered and her rump sank on bunched kicking muscles as the cat squalled again, and thus they coursed, sidling and tense, until the sound died out behind.

TWO days she lay burrowed in the manzanita, sick, stupid, numb; knowing only dimly that her only salvation lay in hiding. For the most part she lay quiet, though, as the numbness wore off, the agony of splintered bone made her rub at the blind side of her head with a forearm. But this fresh contact brought such vicious pain that she swung blindly and snapped at her own paw.

Bone splinters festered and the careless rub of her head as it rolled broke the pustules, and the swelling slowly went down. But her nostrils were plugged and feverish. She had to gasp wind through her open mouth, and the chill air woke

fresh, sharp misery in her broken teeth.

Two days. She was riding the borderline of starvation, now. Weakness of hurt, weakness of poor feeding, weakness from the selfish demanding life in her belly that took what it needed from her own depleted reserves. She staggered when she slid out of the covert the second night.

She raked the sore blind side of her head as she slid under the wire, and she lashed her head and snapped savagely at nothing. That was the bad part, the great blackness that covered half her brain, and she quickly learned to swing her head from side to side to gain a greater sweep with the one good eye.

The rank stink of the sheep was maddening. Man smell and dog smell and the heavy ripe overwhelming odor of wool grease. With entirely unnecessary caution she slid through the crisp chill grass, the lank, starved muscles writhing on her shoulders, her black-tipped tail flicking just the barest trifle at the end. She leaped, and the nearest of the huddled flock went down under her smashing paws with ridiculous ease.

The quick tonic stench of fear washed her nostrils then. In their mewling, blatting, crowding terror, the flock jammed and clambered and their combined smell of stark fear lashed the cat to madness.

The smell of fear she knew. Its sharp acrid odor was part of living and making the kill. But this was mass fear, compounded and refined and overwhelming in its intensity. It triggered her adrenals, sent her lashing into their packed, huddled bodies like a raging fiend. It took all sense from her but the red blood lust that fed its own fires with the slashing and smashing and ripping of tender fragile bodies under her driving muscles.

When they finally broke and ran, she nearly fell down from that heedless burning of strength, and a dozen lumpish bodies lay about her.

The smell of blood and hot meat was almost sickening to her starved body. She locked her paws on the nearest, started to drag it to shelter as instinct told her, but the hunger was too strong. Her jaws tore and gulped, but even as she gorged, she kept pulling back, dragging the carcass, wanting to fulfill instinct even as she fed her famished body. She bumbled and snored with throaty little growls as she ate, and even the stab of broken teeth crushing on bone was more pleasure than pain.

She gorged as she had starved, to the limit of her endurance. She left the first carcass when she could no longer tear great gulping mouthfuls from the bones, ripped into another. And even when she was sick from repletion, when her belly was crowded with packed wool and meat and broken bone, when she could not force another shred down her gullet, she lay a while in a stupid daze, and then she sank her teeth into still another carcass and dragged it, forcing her breath past the wool in a rumbling warning purr. When she found her covert she slept, forepaws jealously holding the lumpy wooly body before her.

As if her body chemistry had been awaiting the catalyst of this gorging, it took up its delayed duties and woke her. Her powerful gastric acids broke belly food into blood food and nerve food and bone food and sent it coursing all through the starved tissues, and when that was done, she awoke, and knew, without really knowing, that her time was up. She fed on the carcass she had brought with her, more daintily now, picking meat and fat from the wool, and then in the chill dim dawn, she left the covert, driven now by an urge greater even than hunger had been.

She did not even swing scent or sight back up toward the snow-laden shoulders of Grizzly. The directional compass in her head weighed all the vestigial factors of wind message and ground slope and weather, laid out her course in the same fraction of a second and urged her into motion. And though encroaching daylight made her naked and vulnerable, she went, south and into the valley, aiming to where the far saddle eased up out of the other side.

SHE paid little heed to the hound voices behind her at first. Man is the only animal that knows ownership. Man alone is outraged when the finely balanced abstraction of *mine* and *thine* is violated. Man alone carries vengeance past the here and now; only man carries the thought of dominion and stewardship in his brain; only man—thin-skinned, fangless, clawless man—uses hand and brain and artifact to

assert his dominion. The wild ones live in close-meshed symbiosis with their world. Man changes his world to fit his needs. As with specially bred dogs that hunt not to fill their own empty bellies but to suit man's purpose. The cat knew within minutes that the dogs were after her.

Instinct moved her on. Instinct made her sidle so that the wind told her nostrils what her blind side could not see. She trotted now, occasionally lifting herself over some obstruction with one of her long easy flowing leaps. Still the hounds clamored behind.

Her ears added up their number. Four of them. They were eating up ground behind her. She was being overtaken, but the knowledge brought not fear but alertness. She knew death too well to fear it. She would resent it, strain every fiber to avoid it, fight it to her last heart-beat, but she would not fear it.

They caught her on the open slope, as she had known for long moments now they would. Their trailing howl broke off as they sighted her, and they came in noisily, but smartly, as became workmanlike and canny veterans. The leader, big, deep-chested and rough-voiced, circled her, came in with sure intelligence on her blind side. She lashed at him, and he dodged, tumbled back into the blackness where her vision could not reach him, and then his fangs tore at her flank.

She whipped her body into a sprung bow, lashed again with a hooked paw, scored this time as she ripped a deep double furrow half the length of his body. His coughing bark slid up to a hurt screech, and she wheeled back and up-ended another of the hounds, tore his flop-eared head half off his body and sent his limp carcass somersaulting fifteen yards down the slope.

She took another scoring slash of teeth along the flank, and then she bunched her hams under her and leaped completely clear of the tangle. She caught the first unwary one that came boring in alone, caught him with a casual cuff that sent him rolling and shrilling with one ear split from skull to tip, and again she took up her flight.

The hounds halooed again, but there was respect, and perhaps puzzlement, in them now. This wasn't following the pattern. She should have treed, or bayed with a ledge or stump at her back; she should have stood off her hecklers until the sweating, hurrying, winded men back there could come up with their cunning weapons to end it. But this wasn't going by the pattern.

Instinct might have told them, had they been wild dogs. But they were man's dogs, man-trained, and they were puzzled. They could not sense the urgent demand within her body.

Still, they had the edge. They were coursing hounds, deep-chested, long-winded. They could run all day, still have run in them when the cat was winded to exhaustion. On a spurt, she could leave them as if they stood still, but she was their meat on the long haul. And her flight now whetted the fighting fire in them, sent them whooping at her in a heedless rush. The big hound caught her as she scrambled up onto the rise out of the draw, came in on her blind side and slashed with his fangs, trying to hamstring her. They went down in a rolling snarling tangle.

The hound screamed then, in sudden terror. But it was too late. The cat had a forearm hooked about neck and shoulders, claws sunk deep into the opposite shoulder blade. She went on her back as his jaws closed on her throat, and her hind legs whipped in and back, and the big hound came apart like a sawdust-stuffed doll, his sudden terrorized yell gone before it really got started. Two down.

But it had all taken time. Something *whanged* down below, and dirt lifted in a long puffing streak alongside her head. She slid off the crest onto the reverse slope, melted into the blessed screen of scrub. Again the *whang* and a long nasty ripping through the leafless scrub oak above her. She slipped into a narrow twisting tunnel of the thick manzanita. The hounds seemed less eager to follow her here.

A hundred yards into the tunnel, and she was in a tight, low-ceilinged room, red with the fleshy arms of manzanita, dark green with its late leaves. The hounds had learned caution. They yapped and bayed out on the fringe of the undergrowth, and she heard them patter in ferocious little mock charges, but they did not come near her.

She caught the man smell soon after, and heard the coarse grumble of voices. Still she lay crouched, ribs rising and falling to force air into her overworked lungs. Then the urgency came back, and she moved,

angling across the scrub. She made nearly half a mile before the air carried her direction to the hounds' sensitive noses.

They'd learned, though. They took the long way around. As she slid up and over the next rise, she heard the shocking *whang* again, but not the close, air-ripping sound. The hounds came as far as the ridge behind her, and then a whistle sounded, and they came no farther.

THE brush played out five miles on into the valley. She stopped and surveyed, sampled the air with her nose, cocked her round ears for the sounds. Cleared land, here. Fences and fields and barns and houses. And broad daylight.

She felt fear now, for this was nightmare stuff. She could not stay here. The hounds would be back, or the men, or both. Implacable snow hemmed her in behind and to the side—open land left her naked and exposed on the other. Along the creek, willows grew, and cutbanks offered some slight cover.

She slid into the first clump of willows. The creek meandered through and among the fields.

Once she lay in the willows for an hour, where a barnyard dipped down into the water, waiting for the man in the barn to take his frightening scent away. Then she slid along the board fence like a shadow and into the trees on the far side.

Once a timid dog, made brave by the knowledge that this was his place, came trotting toward the creek with bluffing noises. She shrank from his noise and hissed and spat at him. He caught her scent then, and fled in yelping terror, and she, almost as frightened, fled up the creek, went belly deep into the water twice despite her revulsion to its wet chill.

Dusk brought some relief, and a late-homing turkey that dallied in the creek bed for one last peck at a sandbar, fed her. The fowl went in a few gulps after the quick soundless kill, and another hour saw her miles away from the incriminating feathers.

She was of a far-ranging clan, and night her natural prowling time. She was into the scrub brush of the foot hills by midnight.

She sniffed at the macadam highway suspiciously. Twice she touched it with gingerly distaste, finally solved the crossing with one soaring leap that touched nothing but the scattered gravel on each shoulder.

The pass in the saddle was narrow but low. Only a few scattered flecks of snow lay on the ground. Twice she spat soundlessly and flattened her ears at the thunderous sound of machines scrambling over the highway, which bisected the pass.

A fresh odor of man and machine dropped her on her belly, and then a glaring light swept over her, made her close her one good eye against it. Another big machine ground to a halt beside the smaller black one from whence came the light.

Sounds, not words. Man sounds. *Hey copper, snooping again? Somebody rob a bank? Not lately. Got a report there's a cougar loose down below. Killed a slew of sheep.* Rough barking sounds. *Gonna make him show his tags 'fore he gets through the pass, eh? Pretty soft for a cop.*

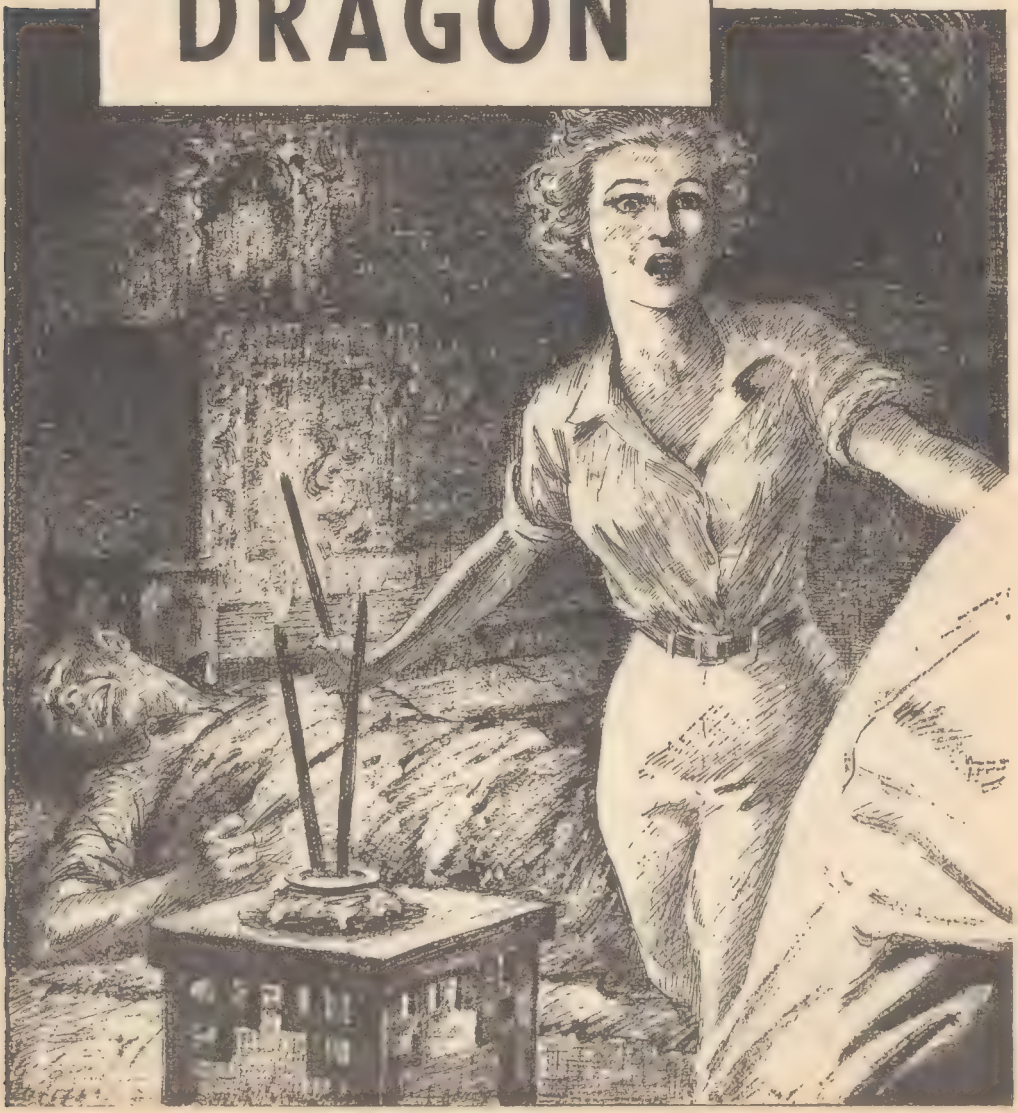
Got a list of hot plates, too. If my spot happens to pick up his eyes, that's all to the good too. More barking sounds, and then the light came clubbing around again. Thunderous sounds of the big machine moving again. She bellied down and slid past the little black machine, and when the light flicked again, it was behind her.

IT WAS warm, back in the little cave, and dark. She stretched languorously on her side. A sore tautness on the side of her head made her rub it roughly with her forearm, and another festered spot broke and relieved the pressure. She wet down the fur of her arm with her tongue and wiped again, carefully. A crazy kaleidoscopic flick of light broke the blackness of her blind eye for just a moment, and her face twisted in a sudden soundless snarl against the pain of renewed vision. Her belly was bumped again, and she foreshortened her neck and wiped the nearest of the three blind, mewing, pushing kittens with her wide, rough tongue. It found the teat, then, and sucked noisily. She stretched her arms again, extruded her wicked claws, let them retract into their padded sheaths.

The kittens mewed and clawed and butted blindly at her ready udders. She let her long body relax, and deep in her chest her rumbling purr burred out.

THE DAY of the DRAGON

By GEORGE C. APPELL



—AND A NIGHT THAT HELD NO DAWN

THERE were only three of us on the club veranda that afternoon—most people were out calling or watching the innumerable parads, and having as good a time as circumstances would allow.

There was Prudhomme, sitting with hands folded, shaking his well-fed face and repeating, in a murmur, "I do not think they're much good," an opinion which seemed to irk Unger.

Neither Unger nor myself knew Prudhomme at all. He had come up to Hong Kong from Saigon with his wife to spend the holiday, and he had been extended the courtesies of the club on what we called a pier pass—a card entitling any transient westerner to use the facilities. His wife had gone directly from the ship to the house of her aunt for luncheon, and he was expecting her to join him here any minute.

"No," he said again, "I cannot say much for herbalists."

Unger rose and gripped Number One's shoulder and propelled him towards the courtyard. . . .

Unger asked finally, "Why not? What's wrong with 'em?"

Unger was a wide-bellied, balding man with ferret-quick eyes and a face that was constantly cocked to one side, like a parrot's, as if listening. He had been in the Orient longer than he had any right to be, and I knew that he was planning to leave it soon. He had been a trader up in the north country until the political situation had changed, and then he'd made his way down to Hong Kong to pick up what he could.

"Herbalists," Unger went on, "are sometimes a damn sight better than surgeons."

A sour expression twisted Prudhomme's dark features. He had been handsome once, but now his collar was under his jowls and his eyes looked permanently tired.

"I cannot believe that the laying on of hands and the grinding of dragon's teeth to powder can cure a person." He lifted his glass, regarded it, and emptied it.

"You don't?" Unger winked at me. He had brought the subject up when Prudhomme asked if witch doctors plied their trade in the holiday parades. "I do. Witch doctors there may be, I don't know. But herbalists there are. I believe in their methods."

Prudhomme shook his head again. "An —acquaintance of mine was killed by one." Hastily—"Not killed like in murder, you understand. But this herbalist, or witch doctor, or whatever, could do nothing for him, and he died."

Harry Unger pulled stubby fingers the length of his jaw. "I still say you're wrong. I'm what they call an old China hand, and I know. Or I should." He popped his fingers for another round of drinks. He lowered his lids a moment, and stared out over the roadstead and the distant gray sweep of the Pearl River and the bug-busy boats scurrying ahead of their wakes. "North of here, before the troubles, I was combining business with pleasure one week. There was supposed to be some fine white jade out in the hills west of Peiping, out Suiyuan way. I went out to track it down, and toted a shotgun and a .45-.70 just in case some good eatin' game came along . . . I was in no hurry in those days. Well, sir, one wet afternoon I was lookin' to make camp, my bearers and me. We hadn't found the jade and we hadn't flushed even a toad, and I was feeling pretty miserable. Then, toward twilight, we come out on the shoulder of a low mountain, and there below us, mebbe halfway down the side, was an old temple. It didn't look to be occupied—there was no smoke or people—so we went down and opened the gate. There wasn't anyone in the bell tower; there wasn't even a bell, and I was turnin' to my Number One to tell him we could stay here, when a boy came out of the temple and crossed the courtyard. He had western boots on, so I figured he belonged to a western man.

"He asked me in pretty good English if I was a doctor, and in Chinese I told him no. Then he said to come on anyway, to come inside." Unger shrugged and grinned and shrugged again. "Inside, lyin' on a prayer mat, was a friend of mine. I shouldn't have been surprised, he used to hunt that country a lot, but it was kind of frightening to find him like he was. Sick, he'd been. Man called Flip. He'd flip you for anything. His wife was with him—he didn't like to leave her behind when he took parties out—but she was just lookin' helpless and a little scared. . . . It was the same day as today, matter of fact. The Day of the Dragon, when you're supposed to even up social obligations and whatnot. Flip's boy lighted a taper, and I could see all those empty wall niches where the idols had been. They'd abandoned the temple years before and gone below. . . ."

YOU could see the place as Unger talked—cold, stone walls rising to the damp gloom of the raftered ceiling; a mouldering altar and decrepit side-stools for the priests. And you could hear the rain-swept grayness whispering away to the valley as night came down and sent the flaming taper tongues lapping more brightly upward, chasing bats into the blackness. Flip was a small man with pain-shot eyes and a shrunken face rutted with the years. He was supposed to be a good hunter, a fine guide, an excellent escort for European sportsmen who hired him. But lying there on the mildewed prayer mat, clutching limply at a greasy blanket, he resembled none of those. He seemed more like a tired old man who was reaching the end of the road. At least, that's what Unger thought, and you couldn't blame him.

He knelt by the blanket. "What's hap-

pened, Flip, old man? Lose another bet?"

Flip would bet on anything. "Damn near, Harry. I had but one customer this season, and he hurt himself a while back and had to go down-country for a doctor. My other boy took him." Flip let out his breath. "So I thought I'd take it slow, see, and try to plug a scroll-horn buck. Sell the head, see?"

But even that hadn't worked out, and on the long trail east for home, Flip had gotten cramps, bad cramps. And on the second day, within sight of the empty temple, he'd doubled off his pony and lain kicking in the mud. His wife and the Number One had hand-carried him in, leading the ponies, and there he'd remained for three days.

"How is it now, Flip?"

"Better. Much better. I think I can travel soon."

"We must!" His wife came out of the swaying shadows. "We've got to get out of this place!" She fixed her great, green eyes on Unger. "He's had an attack of appendicitis, and he'll have another one!"

Unger hadn't noticed until then how lovely her face was. He had heard of her, but he had never seen her before; and now he looked long at her and was completely fascinated by her cropped, tawny hair and the polished skin that had the appearance of marble and would never, never, become chipped or creased by weather. She had married Flip for adventure, everyone said. Life would be an adventure in the hill country half the year, with such interesting people; and, the other half, it would be legation teas and embassy balls in Peiping.

Unger became conscious of the musk of pony droppings and the rancid scent of soiled flannel and the purple-rotten stench from the weather-hammered grave mounds beyond the compound. "What'd you do, Flip—freeze the infection with cold mud, or something?"

Flip rolled his head from side to side. A gnarled thumb emerged from the blanket and jerked downward. "Old boy below. Down in the valley, where the new temple is. Number One went down and brought him up here, and I don't know just what he did, but he did it well."

The herbalist had come slowly, during Flip's first day in the temple. He had come slowly because he was a very old man and the way up from the valley was steep and rocky.

He was a gentle old man whose skin had the transparency of glass; when he bent to the patient, Flip could see the pore-pits clearly, could see the veins. Almost could see arteries and bones.

The herbalist's fingers were cool on Flip's hot abdomen. They were like ten hypodermics syringing their curatives into the poisoned flesh. He had then knelt by the crumbling altar and touched his forehead to the stones three times. After that, he made a mixture of some leaves and tea root and a handful of gray, granular stuff that he had said was dragon's teeth, well-pulped.

"Although, of course," Flip intoned, "the market for shark's teeth is always a good one, and that's what I've got in me now, I guess."

"You drank this thing?"

"All of it. Then he touched me some, here and there, and then he went away. That was a couple of days ago, and tomorrow, boy, I travel."

Unger nodded. "He saved your life, Flip."

"Hell he did. He's an old faker. I'm too mean to die, that's all."

Number One clumped away on feet unaccustomed to fine boots. The heresy of the statement was too much for him.

Unger shrugged a shoulder. "Too bad your customer wasn't here, too."

"That poor man!" Flip's wife put the heels of her hands to her temples. "He was in such pain."

Flip sniffed a few times. "I've seen worse. Clumsy, he was, that's all."

"Clumsy!" Those green eyes lashed his face. "He'd had no experience—he wasn't a—a common hunter!" She lowered her head again. "He was a—a gentleman."

Flip's small sigh was barely audible. "Blew a coupla fingers off with a shotgun. Well, he can spare 'em, all the money he's got."

"Don't you ever say that again!"

Savage, thought Unger. Feline, all of her, with the shadow of claws in her eyes.

It suddenly occurred to Unger that Flip's wife was planning a change, and that this wealthy gentleman-hunter was included in the plan.

Through raised wrists she breathed, "We've got to move. Tomorrow, in the morning—"

Unger realised that she wanted to get

down to the other patient, not stay with this one. It didn't surprise him—he had come to understand many things.

Flip accepted a cigarette.

"I'll make a bet, Harry." He exhaled happily, drew a knot-knuckled hand from beneath the blanket and showed a coin. It was dented on one edge, and the milling was grimy-black. "One buck, Mex. The last I've got in the world. How about it, Harry? I'll make with the symptoms when he gets here, and if he treats me, you pay. If he sees through the act, I pay."

Unger said, "You're on."

THEY had finished a cold supper of rice and greens by the time the healer arrived. He was soaked through his gown, one foot was cut where the sandal had failed to protect it from the stones, and he was breathing hard. He bent over Flip.

He hesitated, and then he stood up and turned away. Flip tugged the blanket up and followed him with his eyes. "What stops you, old one?"

That thin, ancient form faced around, scrawny under the rain-plastered gown. The eyes were haughty, the voice like a blade: "You do not suffer. Please do not send for me again unless you need me." He made a swift gesture with candle-like fingers. "It is a far way, from the valley."

Unger waited until he was crossing the courtyard before he spoke. "Keep the Mex. I don't want it."

"You'll take it." Flip's grin was twisted. "What can I do with one buck?"

After a moment, Unger took it, flipped it. He offered cigarettes around. The woman accepted one, touched it to a taper, and held it in arched shoulder-tension.

Like a cat with a morsel. . . . Unger was about to look to his ponies when a short shriek sliced the silence.

Flip was thrashing his legs, biting the blanket, sobbing. Suddenly he whipped to a sitting position and grabbed his up-drawn knees. They whirled toward him.

His face was blue-white and he could hardly talk. His words came in short outrushings of breath. "This—is—real!" He flopped back on the mat, away from their hands, and twisted on one side. He was motioning downward with his thumb.

Unger rose and gripped Number One's shoulder and propelled him toward the courtyard. "Hurry! Kwaide-kwaide! Get him—tell him to fly!"

The woman was on her feet, eyes clouded with horror. She took a taper, started to say something, then hurried after Number One. "Wait—I'll light the way to the path!"

Unger lifted his drink, tasted it, and drank some. He switched his ferret-fast eyes from me to Prudhomme.

"Well, man? For God's sake!" Prudhomme's collar was wilting under his jowls. Sweat snaked from his hair-line down his cheeks and into his shirt. His eyes were alert and demanding.

Unger put down his glass. "The old boy never came back from the valley. He understood, you see, that his patient was joking."

Down in the streets, the parades were starting with a rhythmic clang of cymbals and drone of horns. "So Flip died—died in terrible agony. The old man could have alleviated the pain, reduced the infection, somehow—they're good, these herbalists—but he never came back. Number One saw Flip die, and I'll never forget that boy's face as he watched the woman. . . . We buried Flip up there among the grave mounds."

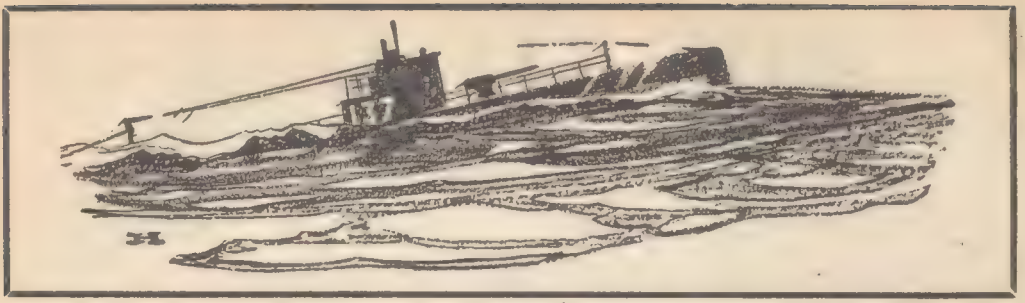
Prudhomme's fist crashed on the metal table. "But why? Why did not this herbalist return as he was told?"

Unger looked surprised. "He was not told to return. The woman caught up with Number One in the courtyard—Number One told me this, when we got back to Peiping—and she gave him some money and advised him to inform the old man that this was just another joke."

Prudhomme was absolutely colorless. His glazed eyes were fixed upon someone coming onto the verandah from the grill. Unger noted the approach in a side-glance, fished in a pocket and drew out a dented Mex dollar. The figure left the shadows of the grill and stepped into the sunlight, and all of us could see the eager swing and thrust of her thighs, the tawny hair tucked in curls under the white toque and the flashing green eyes.

Prudhomme braced his hands in front of him, as if to stop her, and I noticed blue scar-tissue over the stumps where two fingers had been.

Unger winked at me and gave the coin a quick flip. "Shall we see who pays?"



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SANDS OF DEATH

By BORDEN CHASE

In the world beneath the river–hate and death ran close together. . . .

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It was bayonet play—vicious, deadly. No soldier knew his weapons as did these muckers....

THE sand was alive. Gray, fine grained stuff that ran like water. It flowed from the bottom pockets of the shield in a sluggish tide. And the muckers fought it. Half-naked, sweat-drenched and savage, they swept it away with steady cadence. Down went the shovels. Muscles writhed and shoulders twisted. A flash of steel and the sand streamed into the cars.

Back of the muck pile, Big Tim Martin leaned against the rounded wall of the tunnel. A scorching blast of pressure roared from the feed line close to his head. It shuddered against the roof, cut the heavy fog into swirling phantoms and lashed the backs of the muckers. It was as the breath of an approaching storm. The air was taut —heavy—pregnant with a violence about to be unleashed. Lightning glinted from the shovels in quick flashes and found voice in the man-made thunder of the air, while through it, and above it sounded the sibilant swish of moving sand.

A sandhog left the group in the heading and walked up-tunnel. He was a thick-chested brute of a man. An aura of steam clung to his sweat-glazed back. Wide-spread hands dangled close to his knees and swung slowly with each step. His eyes were blue, a bright blue that confirmed the promise of a heavy jaw. Pat Doyle lived for the day. He had seen too many men die in the river tunnels. For him, there was no to-morrow.

He opened the valve in the water line, drank deeply. He turned and a taunting grin creased his features.

He found Big Tim's eyes upon him.

"How much time?" he asked.

The heading boss glanced at his watch.

"Ten minutes to go."

"Watch me kill a Polack," said Doyle and headed for the muck pile.

"Hold it, Doyle," called Big Tim. "I want to talk to you."

"Yeah?" said the mucker, turning.

"You've been looking for trouble with Polack Joe, and I know it," said the heading boss. "When it comes, I hope Joe splits your skull—it's coming to you for some of the stuff you've pulled. But get this. Lay off him while we're in the headings."

"You got us wrong, Tim. Polack and me are just kiddin'. I'm trying to make a sandhog of him, that's all. He's been in the air for more than ten years and he's still just a—a—well, he's just a Polack, that's all."

The grin never left his face as he spoke. But Big Tim had seen men kill with a smile—beneath the river. And his years in "high air" had given him that intangible sense of premonition that comes to men who follow a dangerous trade. He knew the signs—the expectant glances of the gang as their eyes followed Polack Joe and Doyle—the hush that came when the two men quarreled—the bitter rivalry that drove these two muckers to titanic feats with the shovels—and above all, the thin lash that sounded in Doyle's laughter when it was directed at Polack Joe.

Big Tim watched closely as Doyle stopped beside a string of muck cars midway to the heading. They were empties, held in reserve and sent down to the pile as they were needed. Beneath each wheel, a wooden wedge held them from rolling down grade.

Doyle stepped to one side as a small electric locomotive drew a loaded car from the rail head. When the track was clear, the mucker knocked the wedges from beneath the forward empty. He put his shoulder to the rear and started it, then walked beside it with his hand on the rim.

It was part of the usual routine in the heading. But Big Tim suddenly sensed a definite purpose in Doyle's work. Another mucker was standing between the rails at the far end of the track, his back toward the approaching car. And the heading boss recognized the narrow, hunched shoulders of Polack Joe.

Big Tim leaped forward. Sudden rage tightened the line of his lips. He yelled a warning, but it was drowned by the poise of the heading. He yelled again. The car gathered speed and moved swiftly downgrade. And at the end of the track, Polack Joe still leaned upon his shovel, resting.

Faster went the car. The rumble of the wheels was lost in the roar of air flowing from the feed line. It swayed as it pounded along the uneven track. And beside it, grinning, ran Pat Doyle.

It had covered half the distance to the heading when Doyle cupped a hand to his mouth.

"Look out, Polack!" he cried. "Car's coming!"

The mucker bending above the pile dropped his shovel and leaped aside. He twisted, drawing his legs beneath him, and landed face down in the muck. The heavy car crushed into the heap of sand, covering the spot where Polack Joe had stood.

"The Flyin' Polack!" Doyle's voice sounded above the roar of the air. He rocked forward beating his palms against the floor boards, and bursts of large laughter came from his throat.

It was wild laughter. It taunted. And sudden quiet gripped the men of the gang. They waited.

Big Tim crashed into the heading.

"Damn you, Pat!" he said and reached for Doyle. "You'll never pull a trick like that again. Not in my gang. You're through."

The mucker backed away, grinning.

"Aw—I was only throwin' a scare into the Polack," he said. "Don't take it serious. It was a joke."

"Sure, Tim," said Polack Joe as he scrambled to his feet. "Patty—he don't mean to hurt me. He play like that."

He grinned and thumped Doyle's naked back with an open palm. Doyle laughed. And again Joe thumped. His hand rose a third time and the fist doubled as it fell. It landed just behind Doyle's left ear and the mucker pitched forward into the muck pile.

"See?" said Polack Joe and his lips were thin. "We play—only sometime we play rough, eh?"

Pat Doyle sprang erect. His hands went out to Joe's throat.

"You dirty Polack!" he cried. "I'll twist your neck—"

"Quit it," ordered Big Tim and stepped

between them. "You asked for that, Pat. And it saved your job for you. Get busy on the muck—you, too, Polack."

"We'll finish it later, eh, Polack?" said Doyle.

"Yeah, Patty," said Joe. "Next time I break you neck—you bet."

THE muckers grasped their shovels and Big Tim stepped back. He knew, as did Polack Joe, there had been cold malice in Doyle's joke. Had the car hit Joe it would have meant a crushed leg—possibly a broken back. And Doyle's laugh would have been just as loud as he called it an accident.

The hatred between the men had reached a climax on this job. Years ago Polack Joe had come from the coal mines of Pennsylvania with a shovel lashed to his traveling bag. The sandhogs had laughed at the scrawny, long armed miner, but Big Tim knew a man when he saw one. He put Polack Joe to work on the muck pile. The withering heat of the river tunnels and the steady drag of high air had been too much for Joe. He moved less sand than any man in the gang. The sandhogs laughed harder. And loud above the rest was the laugh of Pat Doyle.

Big Tim had waited and in two weeks Polack Joe grew used to the pressure. The heat melted a few pounds from his lean frame and made his ribs stick out like hoops. Then Joe found himself. He swung his heavy shovel faster and faster each shift. The muckers' laughter stopped. They cursed as they tore at the sand. But it was useless. Polack Joe left them behind. That lean, bony frame dipped and swooped at a pace none could equal. He raced them off their feet, filled two cars to their one, and grinned at their curses. The fame of Polack Joe grew. And the muckers acknowledged him the master.

But not Pat Doyle. From one tunnel to another across the face of the earth Pat Doyle had followed Polack Joe. It had been merely a game in the beginning. And the sandhogs still told of the first job these two had worked together. How Doyle had taken the shovels from the hands of two muckers and told them to rest—he'd do their bit. And how Polack Joe had matched him shovel for shovel, yard for yard. How Big Tim had given the miners extra helpers to feed sand to the rivals. And Sam, the huge iron-boss, had driven his men. In the tunnel all must keep time. The iron segments must be bolted into a ring when the muck is cleared away. And the miners may not lag behind the muckers.

And now beneath another river they had started the fight again. But it was no longer a game between the men. Hatred had grown stronger as the years passed. A bitterness had seized them. Doyle's jokes were cruel, deadly. And his laughter was toned to an edged sharpness. To him, Polack Joe was an outsider still, and cast from an alien mold.

Doyle lived for the moment. His pay never got past the card tables or the bar of the nearest saloon. There were whispers of a wife who had left him and a child that had died. But the sandhogs never talked of those things—not to Pat Doyle. And when pictures of smiling youngsters were taken from grimy wallets and passed from hand to hand around the restaurant tables, they were never offered to Doyle.

His laugh was too sharp when he said, "Yeah, a cute brat."

As for Polack Joe—he probably came closer to understanding Doyle than any man in the tunnel. But never were two men more unlike. Joe drank sparingly, and cards seemed to hold no interest for him. In the heading he was part of the gang, a mucker swinging a shovel. In the restaurant or in the hog house, he was a man apart, a man who sat in the corner and thumbed through letters written in a laborious scrawl, letters that carried foreign postmarks. He smiled at Doyle's taunts, refused to drink with him but never refused to fight. And gave Doyle mark for mark in their brawls.

FOR years, it had been only the watchful eye of Big Tim and his heavy fists that had kept the men apart. And now the giant heading boss knew the crisis had arrived. He moved closer to the muck pile. He saw Doyle push two men aside and brace himself beside a car. Glistening streams of sweat lost themselves in the thick mat of black hair that covered the mucker's chest. He hitched at his belt, spat on his hands and reached for a shovel. Half a cubic foot of sand spun through the air and smashed against Polack Joe's naked back.

"Come on, Polack," roared Doyle. "Let's you and me move some sand. A hundred dollars says I fill a car quicker than you. Is it a bet—or are you yellow?"

"So-o-o-o, Patty—you want race, eh?" said Joe slowly. He wiped his hands against his grimy trouser legs, tightened his belt and his gray eyes squinted. "Well, all right. I race you but I don't bet no hundred dollars."

"I knew you was yellow," said Doyle.

"I don't like that word, yellow, Patty. You don't say him no more to me. I don't bet—no. But for last time I race you."

"What you mean, last time?"

"Yeah, Patty—last time," said Joe. "Next shift I go miner."

The point of Doyle's shovel slipped to the sand. He straightened and amazement widened his eyes.

"Miner?" he said. "Why you goin' to be a miner?"

"Miner pays extra dollar," answered Joe and bent to his shovel.

It was true; the miners working before the shield received an additional dollar for each day's work. But Polack Joe and Doyle were not merely muckers, they were champions. And between them was a feud that had never been settled. Pride had held them to the shovel. And pride was worth more than a dollar or many dollars. "The fastest man on a shovel in the air"—that was the title Doyle wanted. Polack Joe stood between him and his goal. And now Joe was stepping aside for a few quickly spent dollars! Pat Doyle spat into the muck pile. It was a lie. The Polack was hiding something.

"What's your game?" he growled and his blade whipped into the sand.

Polack Joe said nothing. His shoulders were rising and falling in rhythmic motion. Sand thudded against the steel sides of the muck car. It flew in a steady stream. Across the heading, Doyle tore huge chunks from the pile and hurled them at the rising mound in the car. The muckers crowded close about. Some shouted encouragement to one or the other; some offered bets quickly taken.

Above, on the platform that bridged the center line of the tunnel, Sam and his gang of ironmen crowded to the edge and watched the struggle. But the eyes of the huge iron-boss rested often upon Big Tim. And at times they clouded with doubt. Sam, too, was old in the world beneath the river. He knew that death and hate ran close together.

Big Tim called to the motorman. The motor roared out of the mist, hooked onto the loaded cars and jerked them away. There had not been a second's difference in the loading time of either. Two empties were shunted to the track ends and the race kept on. *Thud—thud—thud—thud!* From each side of the muck pile sand lifted into the air and smashed against the cars. Not by a single shovelful did either man gain. Faster, always faster, they tore at the sand. And the men of the gang watched in silent wonder.

A grim smile twisted the corners of Polack Joe's mouth and his bony arms thrust deep with the shovel. He shook the sweat from his head and glanced at Doyle. Pat was scowling. His strokes were fast but they lacked snap. Suddenly he stopped. He looked across the muck pile to Joe. And he laughed. Then he turned to the heading boss.

"Hi, Tim," he called. "Is it right about Polack goin' mining?"

"Next shift," answered Big Tim.

"How about me goin', too?"

"You know I'm only short one miner," said Big Tim. "If you want to go mining I'll put you on soon as I get an opening."

"No good, Tim," said Doyle. "I rate that job same as Polack. How come he gets it?"

"Hey, what you say?" shouted Joe. He clambered over the muck pile and faced Doyle. "What you want, huh?"

"A miner's job," snapped Doyle. "If muckin' ain't good enough for you, it ain't for me, either."

"No—no, Patty. You must not do this thing," said Joe. "That job is mine—yeah!"

Doyle shook his head. A stubborn smile twisted his lips. He pointed to the muck pile.

"You're supposed to be faster than me," he said. "I'll race you for the job."

Joe's head snapped back as though he had been struck. He stared at Doyle with narrowed eyes. He knew there was trickery in the mucker's offer. Twice his mouth opened and he seemed about to speak. Then he turned to Big Tim.

"I don't race," he said. "But that is my job."

"The devil you say!" roared Doyle. "'Tis mine as much as yours." He, too, turned to the heading boss. "I want it and I'm willin' to race for it. What say you, Tim?"

Big Tim turned his back. He walked across the heading and sat upon the bumper of an empty muck car. This was no time for a hasty decision. He had been surprised when Joe came to him before the shift and asked to go mining. Frank Webber, one of the miners, was moving on—a tunnel had started in England. And Polack Joe wanted his job. He had offered no explanation but Big Tim had expected none. Joe, like others of his race, was close mouthed. Tim had agreed, but expected trouble.

It was Big Tim's way to let the men earn their jobs. Doyle's offer to race was in keeping with the rule of the tunnel. Joe's refusal had forced the decision upon the heading boss. Doyle's reason for wanting the job was clear. He had never accepted the fact that Polack Joe was a better man on the shovel. He was a gambler and to him, each shift was a new deal. This, or the next might be the one, and he refused to let Joe quit, a winner.

BUT Big Tim had given his word. He frowned and ran a troubled hand across his chin. The clang of steel on steel lifted him to his feet. Across the heading bright flashes of light streaked from two upraised shovels. Above the thunder of the incoming air rose the shouts of the raging muckers. Metal rasped against metal and through the twisting spirals of fog Big Tim saw two half-naked men leaping and twisting.

Polack Joe and Pat Doyle were having it out with shovels.

The muckers had formed a circle—watching—silent. Joe crouched beside the muck pile, the blade of his shovel held level with his eyes. His left hand grasped the shaft and his right was clenched about the handle. His legs tensed. The shovel lashed forward. The edge, razor sharp from constant contact with the sand, streaked toward Doyle's throat. The Irishman lifted his blade and its tip deflected the thrust. It swished past. Down went Doyle's point. His short jab to Polack Joe's stomach landed against a wooden handle. The weight of the stroke bit deeply into the hickory. Again the shovels whirled. Up went the blades and met crashing in the air. Sparks flew from the steel.

It was bayonet play—vicious—deadly. But no soldier knew his weapon as did these muckers. Hour upon hour for months, years, they had lived by the shovel. It was part of them. Their fingers had grown bent to the round of the shaft. The blades followed their every thought. Crouched beneath the edge of the iron gang's platform, they waited. Big Tim leaped across the heading. He shouted. But neither man moved his head a fraction of an inch. Each stood facing the other, shovel ready for thrust or parry. It was death to step between them and Big Tim knew it. His own back carried the blue scars of a shovel fight.

His hands closed upon a pick handle. He stood irresolute. To beat down the blade of one meant a lightning thrust from the other. He waited.

Slowly the men circled in the lull that comes in every battle, just before the final mad onslaught. Doyle's lips drew back. His thin laugh broke the stillness.

Polack Joe moved slowly and warily forward. His shovel lifted shoulder high. Doyle's followed. Joe's point whipped to the right. His left hand slid along the shaft and the blade swung in a screaming arc.

Doyle bent at the knees. The knife edge lifted his hat. Up came Doyle's point. It ripped across Joe's naked chest. A crimson stream followed it. The fitful gleam of the tunnel lights danced in the spreading stain. The mucker staggered backward. Above him the iron men stared in horrid fascination.

Up into the air whirled Doyle's shovel. Both hands gripped tightly on the handle turning the cutting edge downward. It hung momentarily at the peak of the stroke.

"Now! Get it, Sam!" roared Big Tim.

A huge arm streaked down. Vise-like fingers gripped the shaft of Doyle's shovel. Sam heaved. Clutching the shovel with an unbreakable grip, the mucker was swung from his feet.

Polack Joe sprang forward. Blood poured from his chest. It twisted down his arms and dripped into the sand. His eyes were wild. His teeth showed through backdrawn lips. The point of his shovel lifted and his

shoulders twisted. He thrust forward.

The pick handle spun through the air. Driven with all the strength of Big Tim's mighty shoulders, it smashed against the blade of Joe's shovel and tore it from his hands. Big Tim's fist thudded against the mucker's jaw. Polack Joe crumpled.

"Nice work, Sam," Big Tim said.

Slowly Sam released his grip. Doyle landed cat-like on all fours. He scrambled erect. And was met by the same punishing fist that had felled Polack Joe. He pitched forward onto the muck pile beside his antagonist.

"Douse them with the hose," growled Big Tim. "Here's the new gang. We don't want a lot of questions."

BIG TIM set his shoulder to the man-lock door. He glanced at the men ranged along the two benches. They were silent. And that was bad. It meant that yesterday's fight between Polack Joe and Pat Doyle had not been forgotten. The burly Irishman was seated at the far end of the lock. About him were his friends. Facing them were Polack Joe and his followers. It was an armed truce that might flare into fight any moment. Big Tim frowned as he nodded to the lock tender.

Air screamed in through the valve. With it came the withering heat of the tunnel heading. Five pounds—ten—the sandhogs pinched their noses and blew to equalize the head pressure—twenty—thirty pounds and the inner door groaned. It opened, and Big Tim followed his divided gang down tunnel.

"Come here, Pat," he called. "I've something to tell you."

"And I've something to ask you," said Doyle as he walked beside the heading boss.

"What is it?

"Does Polack go minin'?"

"He does," said Big Tim.

"Then get another mucker," growled Doyle. "I'm through after this shift."

"Have it your way, Pat. But if you'll listen—"

"Listen, be damned! I'll not work for a man who puts a yellow-bellied son—"

Doyle had raised his voice to carry above the roar of the air. Polack Joe whirled about. He leaped at Doyle.

"You lie!" he cried. "I am no yellow!"

Big Tim brushed him aside. Then turned and gripped Doyle's throat in one huge paw. He shook. And the mucker's teeth clicked.

"So help me!" he roared. "If you two start anything this shift I'll crack your skulls. For ten years you've tried to murder each other but I'll be damned if you'll do it while you're in my gang."

"I am no yellow!" screamed Joe.

"I don't care if you're bright green!" roared Big Tim. "And you, Doyle—you're thick—thick, do you hear me? You've got a head like a rock!"

"I'll kill me a Polack before the day is out," said Doyle as he rubbed his throat.

They stepped into the heading and Polack Joe climbed the flanges of the iron. With the other miners of the gang he entered the upper center pocket of the shield and stripped to the waist. Wide pieces of adhesive tape covered his chest and at the edges the skin was an angry red. He turned, glanced down at the muck pile and spat.

Big Tim spoke a few words to the heading boss whose gang had been relieved and climbed to the platform. He entered the shield. The face had been breasted down and the miners were bracing it, preparing for a thirty inch advance of the shield. Red Johnson, the shield driver, was setting the spindles that controlled the huge hydraulic jacks. He had ordered additional pressure from the power house and watched the gauge as the pointer rose to 6,000.

"All set?" asked Big Tim.

"Yes," said Red. "The miners ain't finished but I want to be ready to go."

"How's it look?

"Same as yesterday. Gray sand, and gravel above it. Not so good, Tim. I'll be glad when we get farther along."

"So will I," said Big Tim and turned to the men working in front of the shield. "Come on, miners—make it fast."

"Don't blame them for bein' slow," called Pat Doyle from the muck pile. "Polack's probably scared the river'll drop in his lap. He's shakin' so he can't hold a shovel."

Big Tim said nothing. His face was grim as he climbed to the bottom and headed for Doyle. He had taken but a few steps when from the upper pockets of the shield came the crash of splintered timbers.

"She's goin'!" screamed Red. "The face is crackin'!"

For a moment there was a silence. The muckers stood motionless—shovels held rigidly. The iron gang hung frozen to their wrenches. Nothing was heard but the dull roar of the air pouring from the feed line.

Again came the tearing sound of tortured wood. And through it the slither of sand.

"Shove!" roared Big Tim. "Open 'er up, Red. Shove that shield!"

The shield driver twisted the spindles. A mighty trembling shook the tunnel walls. The pistons of the hydraulic jacks thrust slowly against the last ring of iron. The shield moved forward. It ground into the shifting sand, crumbling the upper breast boards like match wood. The air screamed through the face. Men shouted.

A miner sprang from the upper pocket. He landed in the bottom and scrambled across the muck pile.

"The whole face is slidin'!" he yelled.

Crouched before the spindle blocks, the shield driver methodically released one jack after another. Thousands of tons of hydraulic pressure forced the steel cylinder ever deeper into the river bed. The curving hood ground forward. From beneath it streamed the sand. It poured through the pockets and cascaded down into the bottom.

The gang wavered. The shield might choke the flow, pack it tightly and prevent a blow. But if the pistons reached the end of their stroke before this happened—the heading was lost. The air would blast through the face and the river would be upon them.

Another miner leaped to the bottom. The shield driver followed him. Sand poured a Niagara upon their shoulders. They fought through it and joined the gang.

"She stop a little!" A voice sounded from the center pocket. The naked shoulders of Polack Joe were framed in the opening. His arms waved. Sand swirled about his hips.

"You wanted to be a miner," howled Pat Doyle. His laugh was savage and he glared up at Polack Joe. "How d'you like it?"

"Jump!" cried Big Tim. "Get out of there, Joe! It's going—behind you, Joe. It's going!"

THE warning came too late. A surging flood of sand deluged through the center pocket. Polack Joe's arms threshed madly. The sand crushed him—crumpled him—flowed over and around him. Sand poured down upon the tunnel floor, forming a steadily growing pile at the base of the shield. A hand broke through the flood. It clawed upward—grasping. Polack Joe's head jerked into sight.

"A-a-a-a-ah, God! Anna—Anna—I go! Anna, Patty—my—"

The sand poured over him. The shield ground on.

Big Tim leaped across the muck pile. He seized a shovel and sprang to the center pocket. Suddenly the gray torrent ceased. The final thrust of the shield had stopped it. Big Tim braced himself on widespread legs. The shovel bit deep.

A man hurled himself into the pocket. It was Pat Doyle.

"One side, Tim!" he roared and his lips were creased in a smile. "The Polack was callin' me!"

"You! You!" yelled the heading boss. "He was calling good-by to his wife and kid."

There was room for but one man to work in the pocket. The steel walls were but four feet apart. No room even for a full armed stroke with a shovel. And the sand had left little clearance beneath the roof.

Big Tim twisted to throw his first shovelful of sand down to the tunnel bottom. The handle was wrenched from his hands. The black-browed Irishman forced his way forward, pushing, crowding Big Tim from the pocket.

"His kid—what kid?" screamed Doyle as the shovel sank into the sand.

Big Tim slid from the pocket. The flashing blade was sweeping the sand away in mighty strokes. The air was gray with it.

"His first," yelled the heading boss, "Two days ago—that's why he's goin' mining—and he named it after you—damn you!"

A wild cry sounded from the pocket. Doyle's shoulders twisted and heaved in frenzied jerks. The blade of the shovel blurred as it rose and fell. A fountain of sand leaped from the shield. Pat Doyle was swinging a shovel as none but he and one other could. A champion was moving sand.

"Careful you don't start it flowing again," called Big Tim from the muck pile. "Don't go too deep, Pat. I'm afraid he's gone anyway."

"T'hell with you. Go—go if you're

scared," screamed Doyle between thrusts of the shovel. "I'll get him—or bring in the river."

There was a murmur from the gang. *Bring in the river!* The sliding pile of muck that covered Polack Joe was all that held the air in check. Above it was the river, waiting to surge into the tunnel. And gradually the level of the sand in the pocket was lowered. The gang tensed. Their eyes held to Doyle.

The mucker was buried to the knees as new sand slid down from beneath the hood to take the place of that he had removed. He tore at it with slashing strokes. His shoulders writhed. The heavy mat of hair upon his chest was sodden with muck. Breath broke from his throat in great sobs. Sweat poured down his face—carried sand into his eyes—blinded him. Still he fought on.

"I've reached him," he cried as the point bit into flesh.

He cast the shovel aside. His arms plunged into the sand. He dug with his hands, thrusting the sand back between his legs. His fingers touched something solid. Deeper went the arms. His hand clutched an ear—a tuft of hair. He jerked. Straining backward, heaving against the pull of the sand, he lifted.

Up came the head of Polack Joe. Sand filled his eyes, his ears—his mouth was stuffed with it. Again Doyle lifted. He slipped his hands beneath Joe's shoulders and yanked him headlong from the pocket. Together they rolled down the slanting pile of sand to the tunnel bottom.

The gang crowded forward. Big Tim looked once. Then he turned to Doyle.

"He's through," he said.

"Through, be damned!" screamed Pat.

He threw himself beside Polack Joe. His fingers clawed at the sand filled mouth. He cleared it. Then leaned and put his lips to those of Joe. He drew the choking sand from the miner's mouth. And forced air into his lungs.

"Water!" he cried. "Water—you gapin' idiots!"

He rolled Joe onto his stomach, straddled him and his huge paws spanned the prostrate man's back. He thrust forward. Again and again he rocked backward and forward, timing his strokes with the action of Joe's lungs.

Big Tim was silent. The gang crowded close about. One man held the water hose in readiness.

"Wha—what—you do?" gasped Polack Joe at length.

"Got him!" roared Doyle. "I got him back!"

The sandhogs yelled. They leaped madly about.

Big Tim lifted up Polack Joe and held him cradled in his arms. Doyle grinned, swayed slightly and his legs buckled. He sat weakly upon the muck pile.

Again he laughed, but there was joy in the laughter.

Big Tim reached for the hose. He washed Joe's face and held the spout to the miner's lips. Joe drank and coughed. The heading boss twisted the hose and doused Doyle.

"Stop it—you ape," cried the mucker. "I'm all right. I want a word with that Polack."

"What you want, Patty?" asked Joe weakly.

"Is it true? Did you—that kid's name—"

"Yeah. Patty, that's him—like—you," said Polack Joe.

"You want him to be like me?"

"Sure, a damn good man—like you."

"A damn good man," Doyle repeated the words slowly. And wonder was in his eyes. Again he played with the words, rolled them slowly from his tongue, whispered them. "A damned good man."

"You bet," said Joe. "Damn near so good as me."

Big Tim's hand thudded against Doyle's chest as the mucker sprang erect. His iron fingers closed in the mat of hair and held the raging mucker at arm's length. Doyle's face was livid.

"Stand aside, Tim!" he screamed. "Did you hear what he said? Near as good, the dirty—damn the dirty, no-good—"

But Big Tim seemed rooted to the tunnel floor.

"Two miners turned their backs when the face crumpled," he said. "There'll be two new men working in their places next shift. I promised you a miner's job, Doyle. Do you want it?"

There was a thin, whipping edge to Doyle's laugh.

"Want it?" he roared. "By God, I want it! And we'll see who's the better man!"

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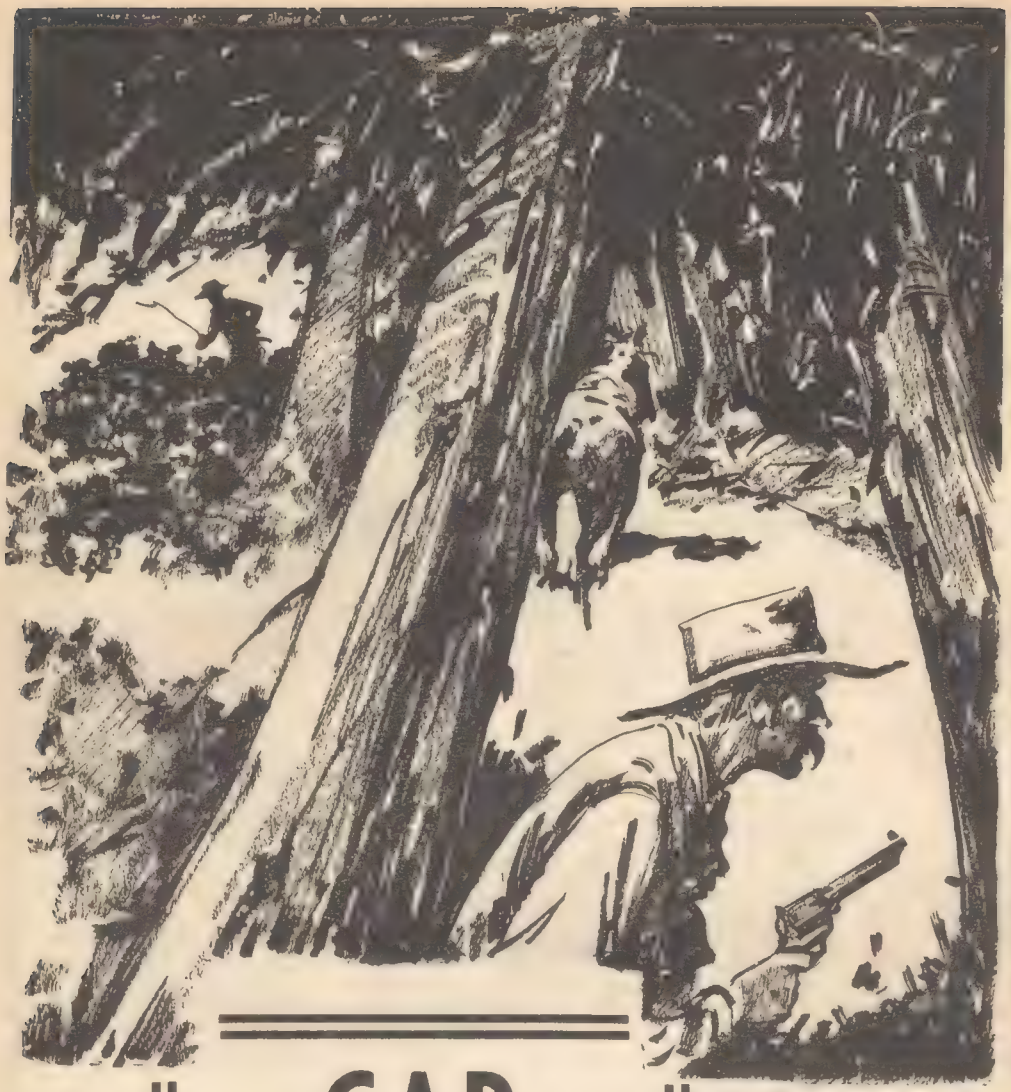

CAP and the DEVIL'S SUPPER

By CHANDLER WHIPPLE

He reached for his revolver, intending to sell his life dearly, but he was not given even that chance. . . .

WHEN JETHROW'S troop of Hewlitt's corps rode out of the golden, light-laced woods that Sunday morning, they were about as fine a sight as Jody's Hollow could ever hope to see. Fine, that is, if you cottoned to Federal cavalry, which not everybody in Kentucky did. . . . The buttons of their short, tight-fitting blue jackets sparkled in the sunshine, their mounts were curried and groomed to the last degree and their half-boots brightly polished.

They were not riding forth to battle, either—they were simply on their way to buy forty pigs from a farmer named Stewart.

For the looks of Jethrow's troopers, you could thank Lieutenant Edwin Hobbs, just out of West Point and formerly of Boston—but not for the job they had to do. The blame for that fell squarely on the shoulders of the captain himself, and the very thought of it was a nightmare to young Mr. Hobbs. Not that he didn't know that war was not

all a business of hard rides and flashing sabers—of course the Army of the West must be fed, and pigs had their importance. What really galled him was that Captain Elijah Jethrow had not been ordered out on this job, but had, quite cheerfully, volunteered for it! And this just at the time when he might easily have taken on the glorious and manly task of hunting down Carr and his marauding guerrillas.

Mr. Hobbs looked up at his captain's broad back, noted the careless, graceless way he sat his horse, and sighed. The young lieutenant was every inch a soldier, quite prepared to obey commands and to suffer, but it did seem to him that he had been given to suffer a little more than was his due. With all the fine, brave captains under whom he might have served his apprenticeship, had he really deserved to be detailed to this coarse captain of volunteers—this farmer from Michigan?

"I gonies," said Captain Jethrow delightedly. "Church is just startin'!"

Mr. Hobbs shuddered. Yet there was nothing for him but to do his duty as best he could. There was even a faint hope that in time he might, subtly, show his captain the error of his ways.

But when?

Captain Jethrow had brought his troopers to a halt before the church at the far side of the clearing. The bell in the steeple was just tolling. Booted men in broad hats and homespun clothes, a scattering few in stovepipe hats and frock coats of broadcloth, and ladies in all shades of attire from somber black to bright sashes and sprigged muslin, milled before the double doors. A few of them paused to stare at the shining cavalrymen, but most of them now turned quickly away and darted into the church.

Then Captain Jethrow gave the order to dismount.

There was a rattle of sabers, a slap of rifle butts as Mr. Hobbs and thirty-odd men with him swung to the ground.

"Boys," said the captain, "we're goin' to church."

Mr. Hobbs gasped. Nothing at the Point had drilled him on this particular type of emergency—yet to the credit of his training he recognized it as such. Out of his desperate need grew a strategem.

The lieutenant stepped forward stiffly and saluted.

"Sir," said he, "may I be exempted from that order? I am a Unitarian. This isn't a Unitarian church."

Captain Jethrow looked his lieutenant up and down. He combed his beard with his broad hand, and his black eyes twinkled. Suddenly, he threw back his head and laughed.

"Unitarian, eh?" he said. "Ain't ever been to no other church? Why, it'll do you good, son."

"Is that an order, then?" asked Mr. Hobbs.

"Reckon so," said the captain. "Sure. Do you good, son."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Hobbs, in his finest military fashion. "But I must tell you, sir, that I obey under protest."

The captain chuckled. "Don't you fret," he said. He detailed a squad of men under Sergeant Bumstead to hold the horses, and started toward the doors.

MOST of the men stepped aside to let the troopers enter. Captain Jethrow nodded affably to them all, but Mr. Hobbs could not see that any returned his smile. For that matter, it seemed to him that every native they had encountered today had showed signs of hostility.

They were barely inside the doors, though, when a frock-coated man rushed down the aisle to greet them.

"Howdy, cap'n," he cried in a great voice. "You're just in time. I'm Parson Corey. We are puttin' on the doggonedest, blessedest service I ever hope to see—mighty glad to have you with us!"

Mr. Hobbs squirmed. The man's eyes were bright, but his beard was long and unkempt. His hair was matted. It would take all the discipline of West Point to enable him to listen to a sermon from this man.

Even the captain, he thought, was a little taken aback. Then he decided he must have been mistaken. Elijah Jethrow shook the man's hand heartily.

"Thank you, parson," he said. "Jethrow is the name. Elijah Jethrow of the Michigan volunteers. This here's my lieutenant, Edwin Hobbs. A real West Pointer. Why, it seems like I ain't been to a good, honest-to-gosh meetin' for quite a spell. Guess I'm goin' to ask the good Lord's pardon."

"No better place to do it than in God's

own house," the parson assured him. He smiled. "We'll be pleased to have you worship with us—still I wouldn't want your men bringin' firearms into the Lord's house."

"Well, now," said Captain Jethrow, pulling at his beard. He looked around at his troopers, each with his clanking saber and his carbine that hung from the shoulder by its broad leather strap. "Well now, it don't seem just right, does it?" He shook his head. "Still, these is wartimes. Tell you what—we'll stack up the carbines in the entry here, and keep our sidearms and sabers. That agreeable, Reverend?"

Mr. Hobbs thought that the parson frowned. But after an instant he clapped the captain heartily on the shoulder. Apparently a chance for a packed meeting house was not a thing to be lightly tossed aside here.

He said, "I'm no man to quibble. Come right in."

Once seated in the church and Mr. Hobbs was able to forget, for a moment, his distaste of the entire proceedings. The church was crude, but at least there was nothing garish about it. Pioneer stuff, he supposed. A crude, homemade pulpit on the platform. Two rows of hard, backless benches split by the center aisle. Two windows on either side, made of plain glass and closed now, in spite of the warmth of the late autumn day. That was all.

Since his lieutenant was seated beside his captain on the front bench, he could, in keeping with proper military dignity, see very little of what was going on about him. He sensed, though, that the church was very nearly full. He and the captain sat alone, with the troopers ranged upon the three rows behind them. The congregation was keeping its distance from the cavalrymen, but seemed to be crowding the benches across the aisle.

The bell in the steeple tolled once. The parson rapped with a heavy hand upon the pulpit, more like an auctioneer than a preacher. Church had begun.

At that moment, a door behind the pulpit opened. A gaunt man with drooping mustaches came out and sat himself down in a chair beside the parson. Evidently he was both presiding elder and sexton.

This man's jaws were working. They seemed to move in unison with the words of the parson. The parson began to pray, but he had lost one listener. For the first time in his life, Mr. Hobbs failed to bow his head in church and was not aware of the omission. His eyes were upon the presiding elder's jaws, and the sight so fascinated him that he was aware of nothing else.

Was it possible? He looked with growing horror. Yes, it was! The lieutenant shuddered. The elder was chewing tobacco—chewing his cud in church!

The prayer ended. Captain Jethrow, beside him, rose to thrust his deep and tuneless voice into the singing of the first hymn. Mr. Hobbs remembered, just in time, to take his eyes from the elder's face and rise with his captain. His heart, though, was not in the hymn and he gave it no more than lip service.

"Brethren," announced the parson when the song was done, "I take my text today from the thutty-first chapter, fourth verse of the Book of Joshua: 'For the Lord saith, Smite down thine enemies. Subdue them with sword and with fire and water'. That's what we aim to do—especially the fire and water."

Mr. Hobbs, very alert now, suddenly frowned. He looked sidewise at his captain, wondering if a whispered word to him would be amiss. But Captain Jethrow's eyes were upon the preacher, his ears seemingly attuned to him alone. On second thought Mr. Hobbs decided that, undignified as it was, he had best resort to a note. He took pencil and paper from his pocket and wrote:

> Captain Jethrow:
> There is no 31st Chapter of Joshua. This man does not sound like a properly ordained pastor to me.
> Hobbs, Lt.

He managed to slip it unobtrusively to the captain during the singing of the next hymn, feeling nonetheless somewhat like a small boy passing notes in school. Captain Jethrow took his time about answering it, waiting until they were seated again. Then he simply scrawled this note across the bottom:

> That's what comes of sticking to the Unitarians.

Mr. Hobbs's face reddened, more with anger than embarrassment. Was his cap-

tain an utter fool? Didn't he know there was something wrong here? Or was he so determined to make sport of his subaltern as to forget all else?

More and more it was becoming evident to Mr. Hobbs that his troop was commanded by a nincompoop. Upon him alone rested the safety of the brave men who composed it, yet obedience to his superior officers had been impressed upon him far too strongly for him ever to do more than suggest. It was a black picture indeed, and for once he was even a little glad that at the moment they were hunting for hogs, not Southerners.

By now Parson Corey, as he had styled himself, was launched into his sermon. There was little further chance for constructive thinking on the part of the lieutenant. The man's voice boomed out till the windows rattled. It seemed even to shake the rafters of the little church.

Just what the gist of the sermon was, Mr. Hobbs could not quite make out. Perhaps he wasn't listening closely enough, but it seemed pretty muddled to him. There was a deal of hellfire and brimstone, all right. The parson appeared to feel it especially important that the Lord visit justice upon the parson's particular enemies, and he had considerable to say about the Judgement Day.

Mr. Hobbs, without listening too closely, was thoroughly convinced however, that if he were in need of salvation, Parson Corey was not the man to get it for him. Mr. Hobbs even doubted very much if the man had God in his heart. Not only did his talk not make sense, but he occasionally used words that did not really belong in a church.

The lieutenant was very glad when it was over. He felt trapped here; he wanted the feel of a saddle under him again.

He had been too hopeful, though. While the next hymn was being sung, a rousing revivalist concoction unfit for genteel ears, a young lad, bootless and in tattered homespun, came up the aisle. He stepped up to the parson and handed him a note. He vanished back down the aisle while the parson read the note, never pausing in his singing. Whether this had anything to do with what happened next, the lieutenant could not know, but he did know that as soon as the song was ended, the parson held up both hands.

"Now folks," he said, "you all know this day was supposed to be Communion Sunday."

Behind him, Mr. Hobbs could hear people sort of shifting in their seats and whispeering. If he had ever wanted to be unmilitary and look around, it was then. But he didn't.

"Naturally," went on the preacher, "we ain't goin' to change the order of God's works on account of Cap'n Jethrow and his Federal cavalry. But I do want these brave men to share Communion with us, and I calculate they're in a hurry. So I'm goin' to ask you folks to honor them by waitin', and let them be the first to partake of the bread and wine."

Mr. Hobbs squirmed in his seat. Over the face of his captain, though, there came something very close to a beatific smile.

While the parson was talking, the tobacco-chewing elder had gone back through the door behind the pulpit. Now he came back. In one hand he held a plate heaped with bread, in the other an earthen jug. He set both down at the edge of the rostrum. Mr. Hobbs looked for him to go back for glasses, but he did not. He stayed right there.

"Cap'n," said the parson, "will you bring your men forward?"

THE next quarter hour would forever remain a nightmare to Mr. Hobbs—and a travesty upon all that was decent and proper. Once the troopers were lined up at the foot of the rostrum, the tobacco-chewing elder passed out the bread, uncorked the jug and set it before Captain Jethrow. The parson stepped out from his pulpit and began to recite. Mr. Hobbs tried to catch the words but he couldn't make out a quarter of them. The man was mumbling into his long beard. It sounded more like some warlock's devilish incantation than the blessed of Communion, and the lieutenant had to remember that he was a thoroughly modern and educated young man in order to convince himself that such things did not happen any more.

Captain Jethrow tipped up the jug and drank. He passed the jug on to his lieutenant. Edwin Hobbs took it, put it to his lips. He offered a silent prayer for forgiveness and drank. He drank no more than a teaspoonful, judging that that was enough to observe the rules of military conduct. It was also enough to tell him that the stuff

was not wine. It tasted more like whiskey, though a horrible kind of whiskey. He had understood that these Westerners brewed a liquor from corn, and this must be it.

As the parson mumbled on, Mr. Hobbs passed the jug to the trooper on his right. This was a North of Ireland man, an irrepressible, hulking fellow, whose name was either Gavigan or Gallagher. Mr. Hobbs was not sure which, because in his brief time with the troop he had heard Captain Jethrow use both names. Maybe the captain didn't care, but sometimes Mr. Hobbs wondered if the captain might not learn to be less confusing.

Gavigan or Gallagher took a very long drink from the jug. So did the rest of the troopers down the line. It looked as if the Irishman were even smacking his lips.

It was over at last, though, and then the parson beamed.

"Now, Cap'n Jethrow," he said, "as one Christian to another, what about those poor fellers out there holdin' the horses?"

The captain nodded agreeably. It was as if this fitted in perfectly with his plans. He passed a note to his lieutenant, one he must have written even before the parson spoke. The lieutenant read:

> Mr. Hobbs:
> Take a detail of men out to relieve those with the horses. I guess you've had as much as any Unitarian can stand. You look peaked.
>
> Jethrow, Capt.

As if to disprove his captain's statement, Mr. Hobbs flushed. Silently he obeyed the command. In respect for the sanctity of the church, he felt that he had to take the eight men nearest him. He was sorry that this included Gavigan—or Gallagher—whose face was beginning to look as if he had swallowed a decayed fish, but it could not be helped.

As he stepped outside the church, Mr. Hobbs squared his shoulders and flicked at his tunic with one hand, ridding himself of the atmosphere of the place. This was hardly in accord with military regulations, but it was wholly an unconscious act.

For the first time in two hours, he could breathe freely. The autumn day was still warm and bright—God was in His heaven and Edwin Hobbs was a full-fledged lieutenant of United States Cavalry. He paraded his men smartly into the churchyard, lined them up as if he were changing the palace guard. Sergeant Bumstead, a trifle astonished, came forward and saluted.

"Sergeant Bumstead!" snapped the lieutenant. "You will take your men into the church. It is a matter of Communion."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant. He did not look pleased, but he obeyed.

In the sunshine, Mr. Hobbs strode back and forth in front of the horses. His practiced eye roved over their accouterments, seeking to find something misplaced or tarnished. But his orders of this morning had been faithfully carried out, and he found nothing. His hand brushed his upper lip in satisfaction. Then he caught Gavigan—or Gallagher—looking his way, and let the hand drop as casually as possible. There would be a mustache for him to stroke soon, but not yet. Not quite.

Inside the church three score or more voices burst abruptly into song, the sound slightly muffled by the closed doors and windows. That weird Communion was finished at last. He wondered why the windows were closed on such a pleasant day and felt, vaguely, that as an officer of United States Cavalry he should know the reason.

The song ended and the parson's voice could be heard again. At the same time a new sound came to Mr. Hobbs's ears. It came from the woods beyond the clearing, from the road by which they had arrived. Mr. Hobbs turned in that direction, straining his ears, still unable to identify it. It was a strange, deep-throated, swelling murmur, not quite like anything he had ever heard before.

Finally his eyes gave him the answer. Out into the clearing, coming at an easy walk, marched a small army of pigs! Well, at the very least a platoon of them. They were bunched closely together in the roadway and were being kept to their course by two or three men and boys on either side.

Mr. Hobbs was not really surprised. Farmer Stewart's place was supposed to be only a mile or so farther up the road. Evidently Stewart had decided to accommodate Captain Jethrow by bringing the drove this far along the way. Mr. Hobbs was slightly soothed.

Then he realized that the drovers were not stopping. They were taking the pigs right on through the clearing. Couldn't they see the cavalrymen here?

"Gavigan!" he said, not turning around.

And, when there was no answer: "Gallagher!"

Still there was no answer, no sound. Stiffly, ready with the most withering look he could muster, Mr. Hobbs turned upon the troopers behind him. But West Point and Boston combined could not keep his jaw from dropping at what he saw.

Gavigan, or Gallagher, was in his proper position in front of the horses, in the best cavalry tradition—except for one thing. Trooper Gavigan was not on his feet, he was sitting on the ground. Furthermore, his eyes were closed and he seemed to be asleep!

On the point of bellowing him awake, the lieutenant's glance roved down the line of troopers. Every man jack of them was in the same position, or one a good deal like it. Asleep at his post!

Mr. Hobbs had no time to dwell upon his own astonishment. This was a matter that called for no cursory treatment. At the same time, the drove of hogs was already nearing the woods at the other side of the clearing. His mission always came first. Mr. Hobbs took his horse from a sleeping trooper, mounted it and rode across the clearing.

He came up behind the man who was urging the drive on from the rear. "Mr. Stewart!" he called.

The man whirled, seemingly startled. He scowled darkly at the lieutenant. Finally he shook his head.

"'Tain't my name," he answered.

Mr. Hobbs drew rein. "Then where is he?" he asked. "These are Stewart's swine, aren't they?"

"Naw. These 'uns is mine."

If the lieutenant had not been riding a spirited horse, the matter might have ended right there. As it was, his mount chose that moment to pivot in its tracks, bringing Mr. Hobbs up momentarily facing the church again, so that he saw another sight that puzzled him. It was a man, going from the rear of the church to the woods beyond. He saw him only briefly, but he was certain it was the tobacco-chewing elder who had sat upon the parson's right hand. And he was running.

IT CAME to Mr. Hobbs then with certainty that all was not right in Jody's Hollow. The antics in the church had been bad enough, eight sleeping men in Jethrow's troop had been distinctly peculiar and so had the hog drover—but the running deacon cinched the matter. Just exactly what it all meant, Mr. Hobbs could not say, but it seemed to him now that all these happenings were of a piece, and that all of them in some manner were for the purpose of seeing that the Army of the West did not get Stewart's swine.

There was nothing in the Articles of War to take care of the situation. Mr. Hobbs spurred his horse after the now departing hog drover. He came up to him just at the edge of the woods.

"Sir," he announced, "I want those swine held right here."

The drover looked up at him and laughed. "Then hold 'em," he said.

Briefly, the lieutenant's hand went to the hilt of his saber. He wanted to cut the insolent fellow down. Yet, looking at the line of hogs strung up the road ahead, he knew how futile that would be. Furthermore, as an officer in semi-hostile territory, he must remain impervious to gibes. The Army merely executes—but does not create—wars.

"Very well," said Mr. Hobbs. He intended, now, to get to the seat of this trouble, whatever it was.

He rode forward, very straight in the saddle and very determined, but the best horse is at a disadvantage among hogs. The lieutenant's mount was confronted with a solid barrier which it could neither leap nor pass through. There was nothing for it but to take to the woods, swing around the drove and cut it off.

Even the woods was not exactly suited for cavalry operations. The trees grew close together and were thickly interlaced by thorny vines. It was all Mr. Hobbs could do to keep his seat. When he finally came out into the road again his uniform and equipment were still complete, but he would never have passed an inspection by Lieutenant Edwin Hobbs.

He came out, though, just ahead of the hogs, as he had intended to do. A boy was walking in front of the drove, and the lieutenant recognized him as that same boy who had come up to the parson in the church and delivered him a note. If he had needed any further proof that there was collaboration in skullduggery afoot, this was it. But they hadn't fooled a certain lieutenant of

cavalry. Unable to repress a small smile of triumph, Mr. Hobbs placed his horse squarely across the roadway.

"This drive," he announced, "is stopping here."

The boy did not even answer. He looked at the lieutenant and grinned and kept on walking. Was he, perhaps, half-witted?

If so, so seemed the pigs to be. They never stopped. They hardly even paused. The thin legs of a horse were to them as so many scrub oaks in the forest.

To Mr. Hobbs, who was quite unlearned in the ways of swine, who did not know that a hog seldom changes its course unless for a reason plainly to its own advantage, the thing was uncanny. Hogs passed in front of him. Hogs passed behind him. Hogs walked between the legs of his nervous horse. Down there just below his stirrups flowed a river of pork, and he was powerless to stem its course.

There are ways, it is true, of diverting a hog. A few very un-Bostonian yells might have done it. Maybe a slash or two with a saber would have turned the trick. But Mr. Hobbs did not know this, and at any rate it was, by now, too late. The body of the drive had passed him, and he was facing once more the man who denied that his name was Stewart.

The drover looked owlishly up at him. "Holdin' 'em, I see," he said.

Mr. Hobbs lost his last pretense of calm. "Look here, man," he demanded, "where are you taking these hogs?"

"Market. I ain't walkin' 'em fer fun."

"Then you can stop right here," Mr. Hobbs declared. "The Army is prepared to buy them. We'll pay a good price."

The drover shook his head. "They been sold."

Ordinarily, Mr. Hobbs was not an impulsive young man, but this was no ordinary time. Suddenly he said, "In that case, I'll ride along to market with you."

The drover hesitated, and for just an instant Mr. Hobbs thought that he looked troubled. Then he chuckled and spat.

"The road's free," he said. And moved on.

As Mr. Hobbs followed after him, the drover spoke no further word. The trees hung thickly over the road, casting somber shadows upon the plodding men and boys, all of whom now were utterly silent. Mr. Hobbs did not like this much, and he began to wish, rather wistfully, for Gavigan and a dozen other stout troopers at his back.

He had followed for some distance when he saw, quite suddenly, that the line of hogs had turned off the road. How the boys up there had managed it was a mystery to him, but it had happened. They were going to the right, up a winding trail not wide enough even for a cartroad.

At the point of turning his horse to follow, the lieutenant hesitated. He wondered if he were not making a mistake. But he was given no chance to decide.

One moment there were only the pigs and the drovers—the next, a man who had appeared from nowhere had the lieutenant's horse by the bridle. A second was pointing a pistol at him. Mr. Hobbs was caught utterly and ignominiously unprepared. He reached for his Navy revolver, intending to sell his life dearly, but he was not given even that chance. Two riders came out from the trees, one on either side of him, and seized his arms.

"Easy does it, lootenant," said one of them. "You're our pris'ner."

Mr. Hobbs turned and looked at him. It was the tobacco-chewing elder, or supposed elder, of the church, whom he had seen slipping away into the trees a spell ago. He looked at the others. They were all rough-looking, bearded fellows, armed to the teeth, and not one of them had the vestige of a uniform.

"Look here," said Mr. Hobbs bravely, "I'm a United States officer. D'you want the whole Army hunting you down for this?"

The supposed elder spat. "You mean that church-goin' Jethrow and his troop?" He laughed loudly.

MR. HOBBS, for all that he was prepared to die in the service of his country, felt a sinking in his stomach. He knew now who these men were—they were some of Carr's guerrillas. Every officer of the Army of the West would have given his chance of promotion to get this close to those elusive raiders, but not in this fashion. Carr's men were nominally Southern sympathizers, but they did not in fact belong to either army. They had gotten their baptism in the Kansas wars, and the rules of civilized warfare did

not trouble them at all. They had a reputation for taking no prisoners.

It was well enough to die in battle, Mr. Hobbs thought, but to be left hanging from some tree in the Kentucky woods was quite another matter.

His captors lined up to the front and rear of him, and he saw now that there were at least a score of them, all of them with mounts and all heavily armed. All had knives and pistols, most of them carbines and sabers as well. They started up the trail behind the hogs, and finally Mr. Hobbs was silent.

They had ridden quite some distance, with Mr. Hobbs watching for a chance to break free and make a run for it and finding none, when swift hoofbeats sounded behind them. He turned in his saddle, hopefully. But the man who rode up to join them was the one who had introduced himself as Parson Corey.

"Howdy, cap'n," said the elder. "How'd you leave them Yanks?"

Hobbs realized then Parson Corey was Carr himself. Carr was laughing heartily.

"Tolerable, Luke," he answered. "Tolerable. Didn't act like they wanted to be roused, though, so I come away." He came up beside Mr. Hobbs. "But I see you fetched one."

"Couldn't help it," chuckled Luke. "He walked right up to us. Said he wanted to come. What do you want we should do with him, cap'n?"

Captain Carr peered at the lieutenant a moment, then slapped his thigh. "Why," he said, "we'll feed him some fine Kentucky ham! Best in the world. We'll just give him a fine dinner—tonight."

Mr. Hobbs caught the sinister implication, but he did not flinch. He might be scheduled to die before morning, but he was young and he was curious.

"Sir," he said, "do you mean to say that Captain Jethrow and his men are all sleeping? That you—put them to sleep?"

Carr laughed. "Ever hear what a steeped tobacco plug poured into whiskey'll do?"

Mr. Hobbs was genuinely shocked. "Are you so godless," he said, "that you'd put such a mixture into the Communion wine?"

"I ain't said what I did do or didn't do," Carr answered. "Anyhow, that was no Communion wine. Fust place, I didn't say nothin' over it but, 'Let's see you put the Yanks to sleep.' Second place, I ain't no preacher."

"You mean you got all those people together on the chance that we'd stop?"

"Wasn't any chance," Carr assured him. "Everybody hereabouts knows Jethrow wouldn't pass a church. The congregation, they was already there. They listened to reason. They're a sight more scared of me than of a passel of Yankee troopers. The parson—me and Luke had to tie him up."

So that, thought Mr. Hobbs bitterly, was what came of riding openly through the country, making your presence and your purpose known as Captain Jethrow had done. The word went out to Carr's guerrillas. Carr wanted the pigs himself and Stewart was apparently glad to let him have them. Evidently, though, not enough of Carr's men were nearby to make possible an open attack on the cavalry, and the pigs had to be driven down that road—so Carr had resorted to trickery.

And so, as a result of Elijah Jethrow's dillydallying, the Federal troops would not get forty hogs which they needed badly. Carr and his outfit would eat very well this winter. And neither of these things, very probably, would matter much longer to Lieutenant Edwin Hobbs.

Now though, they mattered a great deal. The lieutenant, as they rode on through the woods along the narrow trail, could not forget how he had failed in his first job of any importance. It was no excuse for him that he had a stupid superior officer. This kind of thing was to be expected of a captain of volunteers—it was up to such men as Edwin Hobbs of the Regular Army to see that it did not happen.

They followed the woods trail until the afternoon was well toward its end. They came finally to a clearing hard by a cave in the hillside, and this seemed to be their destination. Here Carr and his men dismounted, and Mr. Hobbs of necessity followed suit.

The hogs which had brought about his downfall were driven into an enclosure already prepared for them. Stewart and his drovers disappeared, their bargain completed. A few of Carr's men went into the cave and began to build a fire there. Perhaps they meant to butcher tonight.

All in all, Mr. Hobbs thought, they were not being very cautious. They hadn't even

tied him up. A few sentries had been thrown about the camp, but that was all.

Still, that was enough. Two men were keeping watch over him. As for the fire, no doubt the smoke trickled out somewhere above them in the hillside and would be all but unapparent. And when it came to sentries, whom had they to guard against? Not Jethrow's troopers, surely. If they had finally bestirred themselves at all, it would be to ride on in the opposite direction, to Stewart's farm. If they came back and tried to follow the trail, it would be too late—night would have fallen and Carr and his cutthroats would have eluded the Federals once more. Carr could hardly be expected to have much fear of a man he had tricked as he had Captain Jethrow.

Such were the thoughts of Lieutenant Edwin Hobbs, sitting disconsolately against a tree, and because the lieutenant was very young and had not learned in any military manual how to make a poker face, his discouragement was apparent. It was so apparent that Luke, the pseudo-elder and one of those guarding him, suddenly laughed outright.

"Don't know what ever got into your ma," he said, "lettin' you out alone at your age."

Mr. Hobbs got quickly to his feet. His forage cap was missing and so were other parts of his equipment, but he could still stand militarily erect.

"Sir," said he, "I take it you're second in command. Your captain at least makes a paltry pretense of being an officer and a gentleman. Would it be possible for you to observe his example?"

Luke almost swallowed his tobacco cud from surprise. He tried to laugh but the laugh did not quite come off. He was so amazed that he did not see that at that very moment the lieutenant had stopped looking at him, and fixed his gaze upon the woods beyond.

But since Mr. Hobbs did not know how to make a poker face, Luke did at last notice this. He turned about.

The instant he did so, he was pushed rudely backward. His saber was lifted from its scabbard. Before he could get out his pistol Mr. Hobbs was gone, was rushing toward the guerrilla commander and brandishing the saber.

"Captain Carr!" shouted Mr. Hobbs. "Captain Carr, stand and fight!"

THE lieutenant's move may have been impulsive, a result of that flash of blue he had seen out there in the woods. Whether or not—he could not have chosen a move better calculated to the advantage of Jethrow and his troopers. As they burst into the clearing, there was already slight disorganization among the guerrillas.

Almost in the center of the clearing, Carr and Mr. Hobbs were slashing at each other with their sabers. Two or three men were watching their chance to dispatch the Yankee from the rear; several others were looking on curiously. And suddenly, the Federal cavalrymen were among them.

Captain Jethrow had planned the attack to perfection. Those first men, needing to get close upon the camp, had come dismounted. Thus they had slipped past the sentries. They came in now firing their short-barreled carbines, and they brought chaos to the clearing.

Smoke clogged the air and men went down without ever getting a hand to their guns. This was not enough, though. Carr's men were used to sudden battle, to the dashing attack and the lightning retreat. They rallied after a moment and began to drive the dismounted troopers back.

It was then that Jethrow's strategy showed to best advantage. It was then that the rest of the troop, able to ride up now that the surprise was over, charged in on horseback with their sabers ready.

The battle did not last long after that. Jethrow's Michigan troopers had an unpleasant feeling in their heads and stomachs, and it was just enough to make them the uglier fighters. Never were their sabers swifter and heavier than today.

Half of Carr's guerrillas were down within five minutes' time. The rest, those who saw a chance, fled to the woods to be pursued by hard-riding horsemen. Only in the center of the clearing did the battle continue—there two sabers flashed and rang.

Then that was over. A steel blade flew through the air, unguided by human hand, making a bright arc in the rays of the setting sun. Mr. Hobbs, still the Bostonian gentleman, stood aside to allow his opponent to regain his saber. Captain Carr, though, breathing heavily and bleeding, looked at the blue-coated troopers surrounding him and knew that he had had enough.

It was somewhat later that the last of the guerrillas was rounded up and Mr. Hobbs was able to report to his captain. When that time came, he found Elijah Jethrow beside the brush fence at the far end of the clearing. He was inspecting the pigs.

He beamed at his lieutenant. "There's forty-two of 'em," he announced.

Mr. Hobbs saluted stiffly. "Sir," he said, "I owe you my life. Those ruffians meant to hang me. And I am afraid that I left my post, disobeyed your orders and am subject to discipline."

Captain Jethrow smiled. His hands, folded behind his back, came forth holding a fatigue cap and a pair of very white cavalryman's gauntlets.

"Disobeyed?" he said, "Why, son, it ain't always the orders a feller gives out that counts. It's the orders he don't give out. How do you reckon I'd ever have tracked Carr down if you hadn't dropped these off, so easy like, along the way?"

Mr. Hobbs was pleased, and it wasn't just because he had hated so to part with those gloves. "Yes, sir," he admitted. "I did hope you might find them."

"Smart work, son," said his captain. "Kind of had a hunch that when it come to real trouble you'd figure out a trick or two that wasn't in the books."

"Why, thank you, sir." Mr. Hobbs was amazed. Then: "Look here, sir. D'you mean to say you'd really planned all this—from the start?"

Captain Jethrow grinned. "Well, now, son, I suppose any man can claim he's planned somethin' if it works. Howsomever, you weren't the only man writin' notes in that church."

"You deliberately put yourself in Carr's hands?" Lieutenant Hobbs said, aghast. "But supposing it hadn't worked? Suppose he'd managed to take the whole troop?"

The captain shrugged. "That's a chance you've got to take, son. If a man gets tricky, the only way to beat him is a trick. Man wants to fight—then fight him. Looks like we done both." He paused and smiled sheepishly. "Course, it may be that it comes sort of easy for me to play the fool. Maybe I am one."

"Sir," said Mr. Hobbs with feeling, "that isn't true. Why—why that's splendid tactics."

"Thanks, son," the captain answered. "Speakin' of military matters, I'd sure like it if you could learn me how to handle a saber the way you do. The boys, they're sayin' they'd like a lesson too."

Mr. Hobbs, being very young, blushed. "Why—yes, sir," he said. "I—I'd surely be glad to do so."

"That's fine," said Captain Jethrow. "We're goin' to have a real outfit here before the winter's over."

Mr. Hobbs felt an unaccustomed warmth come over him. His captain was neither tall nor lean, but at this moment he seemed to him a very military figure of a man. Only one thing troubled him.

"Captain Jethrow," he said hopefully, "then you really weren't coming after pigs at all? You were only trying to bring Carr into the open?"

"Not after pigs, son?" Captain Jethrow looked his astonishment. "Forty-two pigs, and that 'un there'll top three hundred or I miss my guess! Mighty fine vittles we'll have this winter, son. And look at the bargain we got. We was goin' to have to pay for these pigs. Now they're contraband, and free."

"That's true, sir."

"And another thing, son." Captain Jethrow slapped his lieutenant on the shoulder. "I gonies, we're goin' to have a real outfit here, and I bet you don't like me callin' you 'son'. You want I should call you 'Mr. Hobbs', I'll do it. You've got it comin'. I just ain't used to misterin' folks."

It may have been madness or it may have been sheer boyishness. Lieutenant Edwin Hobbs, out of West Point from Boston, slapped his captain's shoulder in return!

"Sir," he said, "you may call me any damned thing you please and I'll like it. I gonies, you may!"

ADVENTURE regrets to announce the resignation of A. Hyatt Verrill, noted authority on the history of piracy and buccaneering, from our staff of experts. Mr. Verrill has taken up residence abroad, which would make it inconvenient for him to carry on with us in his late capacity.

We should welcome nominations from readers for someone to fill the spot Mr. Verrill handled so ably.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

THE wet way to Florida.

Query:—I would like some information on the inland waterway from Phila. Pa. to Florida.

Do you think it would be possible to take a canoe trip that far and if so, what time of year is best to plan it?

I have thought of doing this with a friend of mine for some time and would like your advice both as to trip and equipment and approximately how much time would be needed.

W. J. Schad
Upper Darby, Pa.

Reply by Colonel Roland Birnn—The canoe trip from Philadelphia to Florida is practical, but a long, tough grind. A beamier, wide sterned, roomier boat of light construction would be almost as light in weight, and equipped with a small outboard engine would offer many advantages.

In the first place, you could sleep in such a boat without necessarily going ashore. Next, it would be more seaworthy than a canoe. (A lot of canoers will "harumph" with displeasure at this statement, but I've done cruising in both types. I mean a seaworthy outboard boat with a moderate h.p. outboard engine, and not a racing type, or even the so-called "runabout".) If you must take a canoe, get a sponson type and equip it with sails and leeboards; sailing will sure make a trip more enjoyable and far less monotonous.

Your greatest hazards:

1. Opposite mouth of Potomac River, Chesapeake Bay.
2. From Wolf Trap Light, across Mobjack Bay and mouth of York River, to the first shelter back of Norfolk.
3. Mouth of Pasquotank River (below Elizabeth City, N. C.) through Albemarle Sound and way into the Alligator River.
4. So-and-so's in southbound boats who won't reduce speed when overtaking you. (That's one reason a beamier boat is better for the trip.)

Information: Dope is contained in the following publications:

1. Section D, *Atlantic Coast Pilot*, by U S Coast & Geodetic Survey. Cost $1.50. Get it from C & G S chart agent in Philly. (See classified phone directory under "boats" or "yachts".) The Coast Survey used to issue a pamphlet on the Inland Waterways free but the dope is now incorporated in Section D of the Coast Pilot. Section D goes from Norfolk to Key West.
2. *Cruising Guide to the Chesapeake* by F. Blanchard, publ. by Dodd Mead & Co. $5.00 a copy.
3. Following magazines which *might* be found in Public Library of Philadelphia. They contain articles on inland waterways to Fla.

Yachting Oct. 1949. *Motor Boating* Oct. 1950.

Rudder, Nov. 1949. *Motor Boat* Oct. 1949, and Sept. Oct. & Nov. 1948.

If interested in sleeping and "living" in your boat, get *Motor Boat* for Aug. and Sept. 1948, article "Open Boat Cruising".

4. *Inland Waterways Guide*, Marina Publ. House, Box 101, Wilmington, N. C. Price $1.00 a copy.

Charts: I don't think you need the small scale 400, 500, 600 and 700 series charts for a small boat trip. The large scale 1200 series will suffice, below Norfolk. For the Chesapeake use Charts 77 and 78. (All these are C & G S nautical charts.) At least use the large scale charts for planning and study, prior to the trip.

Cruising and camping: In a canoe, and paddling, you will have to camp out much of the time. You'll find it no fun when you get into the deeper South. Insects and rodents. Also, many of the stretches are built-up and "civilized" for some miles at a stretch. You can't leave your canoe and equipment untended to go to town for supplies. With an outboard boat you can stop at gas docks and marinas along the way and leave the boat there while ashore, or you can sleep aboard and don't have to worry about dirt, bugs and rats. Also, it takes less time than if you were unloading all your equipment or finding a boarding house to spend the night. By the way; don't take a gasoline stove for cooking. You may not be able to get white (clear) gas for cooking by the fall of 1951, as things look now.

Most beautiful stretch: the Waccamaw River of South Carolina. Tropical, with moss-hung oaks along the stream. Colored people fine; many of them Gullahs, some Brass-Ankles (White-Indian-Negro). Another by-way trip well worth making is Severn River, but above Annapolis bridges. Camp on that crescent shaped islet in the middle of the "bay" off Indian Landing. Or visit Tangier Island in the Chesapeake or Smith Island (the latter place not so highly touted as Tangier by many writers, but much more interesting.) Wild country: Upper and Lower Keene Broads, at south end of Slaughter Creek on Little Choptank River of the Chesapeake. But take a compass and use chart 553.

Best time to start: Mid-September. The big problem in power cruisers is to start from the North before cold weather sets in and not arrive in the south before the heat eases off. In a small, slow boat you will be doing what I have done several times, loiter along the way. By the time you get in the lower Chesapeake you will be overtaken by the southbound fleet, from ninety footers to those about twenty-four feet.

Most of them are in the thirty-five to 60 foot class. If you and your partner are right guys you might be invited to spend the night aboard one, on some occasions. Count on being held up by weather, in some places for three days at a time. I take the Dismal Swamp route out of Norfolk, and I always lay up at Elizabeth City until I get a good forecast for Albemarle Sound. In your small boat count on one-third of the time being not *worth* traveling. Winds generally northwesterly in fall of year (that's why sail is nice, as winds are favorable).

If you see my cruiser *Stardust* (13K203) along the way give me a hail. It's a thirty-one footer, with a dinghy in davits across the stern.

And good luck to you. You'll have the best luck by studying and planning the trip and the means of traveling and living en route.

CONVERSION of life and whaleboats for pleasure or profit.

Query:—I would like to get some information on used, condemned or surplus life or whale boats. Anything from 18′ to 24′ with or without motor.

To date I have built one 30′ cruiser and fitted her out and she went to Florida—also a 24′ launch. I'm now working on an idea of conversion of life or whale boats into small cruisers.

1) How high above deck could I go safely with a cabin, due to round or semi-round hull?
2) Would you suggest ballast? If so, would concrete be all right?
3) Where can such boats be obtained in this vicinity (100 miles west of Chicago)? Approximate cost? Condition?
4) If through government or Coast Guard, what is the procedure?

Ronald Wolfe
Dixon, Ill.

Reply by Colonel Birnn—Contrary to what many high-powered naval architects, most of whom know nothing of 1) economy, or 2) handling small boats, will tell you, the idea of converting a lifeboat is sound. No, I don't mean an old rusted-out hull or a wooden one that is falling to pieces. Or a high cabin and no ballast. Or an ocean cruise on a lifeboat that's been converted for comfortable river cruising. Or a tubby lifeboat hull fitted with a huge engine in the hopes of making a speedy cruiser out of it. But if you want a fairly comfortable cruiser, cruising speeds not in excess of 6-7 knots, and an economical boat—then a lifeboat makes a good basis for a conversion job.

Read November, 1950 issue of *Lakeland Yachting* magazine, published at 809 South 8th Street, Sheboygan, Wisconsin. It has an article by a doctor who made a pretty good cruising sloop from a lifeboat.

How high should your cabin go? Depends upon the length and beam of the boat (lifeboats vary in shape, you know) and where you want to cruise with it. For Great Lakes cruising don't put full headroom in anything less than a 27-28 foot *beamy* type of lifeboat. And then only with a power cruiser; not a sailboat. If you want a bit of headroom, get it by building up the after part of the cabin into a sort of doghouse, which is sure convenient for dressing or stretching in. But get at least four feet from cabin sole to carlins. That will give you sitting-up room. Plus space under the bunks for storage.

Ballast? That also depends upon type of lifeboat and its purpose after being converted. For a Great Lakes cruiser 24 feet long (metal hull) try about 550 pounds ballast. Scrape inside well. Paint with

really rust-containing (meaning it prevents the rust from growing worse, not that it has rust as an ingredient) paint. It's called Rustrem, and made by Speco, Inc of 7308 Associate Ave, Cleveland, 9, Ohio. Then careen boat, run concrete in on one side. Let it set. Careen to other side, cast concrete on that side. Result; ballast where you want it, up around the turn of the bilges. Also a nice deep bilge-water trough or channel, at the lower point of the V. Do not cast ballast into an old wooden hull. Also never cast ballast in the full computed amount. Save some for portable ballast for properly trimming boat after it's been completed.

Lifeboats have been scarce for the past four years. Kargards Boat Works, Marinette, Wisc. once sold some. They may know where some are still for sale. Or try an ad in *Lakeland Yachting* or in the Chicago paper that specializes in boat ads and news. In your ad ask for any lifeboat that may be for sale *and* also request information from readers if they know of any for sale. You'll be surprised how many boatmen will try to help you out. They may know of some boat parked somewhere which the owner would sell if anyone offered him a price.

If you start converting now, you're going to run into equipment and material shortages. Maybe it would be better to rebuild someone's old cruiser, that can be bought cheap because it is old and does need repairs. However, many shortages will be in the "red" metals, and for fresh water use, iron fittings are O.K. In fact, for a sailboat I like *wooden* cleats for securing running rigging.

BOAT trip to West Indies—the rugged way.

I am proposing a small boat trip through the West Indies. I plan to go through the Bahama Islands to Puerto Rico and on to the Leeward Islands. This trip would be an extended honeymoon. We would not want too much or too many comforts and would be in no great hurry. We are each twenty-two years of age.

Would you please answer the following questions:

(1) Would you consider an 18-foot open sailing boat with an outboard motor safe enough to tackle the trip? If not, what would be the minimum size?

(2) When would be the best time for such a trip? When is the stormy season? What are some good places to lay over?

(3) Would we be able to "live off the islands" to a very great extent? (Fish, game, etc.)

(4) How are the prices in the islands? Cost of living?

(5) Would you give me any information on Saba or any other out-of-the-way islands?

(6) Would there be much red tape on passports?

Yours truly,
Taylor Ashley
Chicago, Illinois.

Reply by Jack B. Leffingwell—Do not attempt the trip you propose in an eighteen-foot boat. I would say that to try it would be almost suicidal. The smallest craft that I would dare use on such a trip would be a forty-foot ketch of deep draft and very stout and seaworthy—also with a good inboard motor of at least thirty horsepower. I have lived most of my adventurous life in these waters and know of what I speak.

I take it for granted that you contemplate starting from Miami and sailing across to Bimini and thence through the Bahamas—a pause here to ask: Are you a navigator? Do you know that the Gulf Stream between Miami and Bimini flows northward with a speed varying from three to four knots? And if by mischance you miss Bimini you could sail for days looking for a landfall, short of food and water and all that sort of thing. Too, these are dangerous, reef infested waters, subject to violent squalls.

That is just a starter. If you are a navigator the trip thru the Bahamas should not be difficult until you reach Acklins Island. From there to Puerto Rico you must traverse some of the roughest waters in the Caribbean and to make this part of the voyage you MUST be a navigator, as this part of the trip is through great wide spaces of open water, always very rough for a small boat and a true landfall very difficult to make.

From Puerto Rico, along its eastern shore, through Culebra and the Virgin Islands the trip would not be too dangerous, although I would not dare attempt it in an 18-footer, as all the islands of the leeward and windward group are within sight of each other. But the passes between these islands can raise particular hell on very short notice. Also please consider this fact—practically none of these islands have safe harbors into which you can slip during a storm. In the northern group St. Bartholomu (French) has the only hurricane-proof harbor. On down the line you will only find safe anchorage about every two hundred miles.

I have a good friend who made the trip from Trinidad to the Isle of Pines in a converted 45-foot Navy motor-sailer and his wife died from appendicitis on the trip—you've got to consider emergencies.

There is no game to be found on any of the West Indies islands. They are overpopulated by natives, many of whom have to rely on rainwater for drinking purposes, as volcanic rock does not retain water for wells. As a whole the islands are healthful with little or no malaria. There is some leprosy in the French Isles but there is not much danger of contact. You had better consider taking your basic food with you as little can be secured en route.

Saba is a mountain peak rising out of the sea. As there is no harbor, it is impossible to land most of the time. However, in my mind Saba is the paradise of the Caribbean—if you live there and have no boat.

In closing remember this. These Islands are English, French and Dutch and the red tape involved in clearing from one island for another is truly maddening. This is no happy-go-lucky trip—each government is very jealous and you will encounter more special regulations than you dreamed were possible. Once while in Fort de France Martinique I had to wait three days to get a permit to visit St. Pierre just a few miles down the coast, and when I reached St. Pierre I had to pay a special fee because I had not also secured permission to climb Mont Pelee—you see how it goes?

I do not usually go into such detail as I have with you but in this case I do want to warn you. Let me suggest that you fly to Puerto Rico or the Virgins and there take passage on some small coastwise schooner that visits the various islands. This will give you the trip at very small cost and you will get safely back home.

Looking at a map of the Caribbees and actually visiting them are very different. They are dangerous isles and can only be safely traversed by experienced seamen.

MAKING your own crossbows.

Making and shooting crossbows is a hobby and favorite sport of mine and there are a couple of questions in my mind that I would like to ask you on this subject.

What are the approximate dimensions of your osage bows of about 175-lb. pull?

I recently finished two stocks, one 15 inches from the bow belly to the catch and the other 14 inches. I guess this would be called the length of draw, as in longbow archery.

Also what do your stocks measure—drawing length I mean. From the pictures in a recent issue of another magazine of your crossbows I judged the draw to be about 14 inches.

The osage bow I use now is 30″ in length, around 115 lbs.

Some day I hope to have the opportunity to visit your shop. The article by Mannix in *True* was very interesting.

R. C. Yates
South Daytona, Fla.

Reply by Earl B. Powell—In regard to the dimensions of my stocks, they are 32 inches long and the stirrup makes them 36″ over all. The draw is 14 inches.

I have been making my wooden bows 36 inches long, so this is just half the draw for a longbow, and 14-inch arrows are also just half the length of the long ones. Lately I have been using dual alloy for bows, and weight for weight it outshoots wood or steel. I make these in 30″. I made one 25″ with a 200 lb. pull at an 11-inch draw, and shot it for flight and the arrow was still climbing at 350 yards when I lost sight of it, so I guess at a 45° angle it would shoot around 500 yards or more. I kept this bow strung up for more than four months and it shot as well after that as at first.

I enclose a couple of photos so that you can see the way my bows look in detail.

HOMESTEADING in Canada.

Could you send me information regarding homesteading in Canada. I would like to know weather conditions, climate and trapping and hunting laws, also the use of timber for building and water rights. I intend to raise stock and do some farming. I have a wife and four children. I am interested in that part of the country along the Alcan Highway but would like information regarding other parts.

Wm. Brown
Silverton
Colorado

Reply by Philip H. Godsell—I think the best thing you can do is write to the Department of Colonization and Immigration, Government of Canada, Ottawa, for full information regarding land available for settlement by emigrants from the United States, specifying the sections in which you are particularly interested, also to the Department of Colonization, Government of British Columbia, Victoria, B. C, and perhaps the same department of the Canadian Pacific Railway in Montreal. Between them they will be able to give you booklets containing far more comprehensive information than I could in a letter. For information regarding regulations concerning making a permanent home in Canada, you might write the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at Ottawa, for a copy of the said regulations.

As for the country along the Alaska Highway, I happen to know it quite well, as years ago I blazed a road from Fort St. John to Fort Nelson, which became the first 300 mile link in the now famed Alaska Highway. The Highway is being kept in first class condition and the route is from Edmonton, 475 miles to Dawson Creek, which is the beginning of the highway. I should point out that for the first five hundred miles the highway runs largely through a muskeg country covered with matted spruce forests of low quality timber, and interspersed with small areas of meadow. There is quite a farming settlement at Fort St. John, but until the Highway went through they were having a pretty tough time and were literally taking in each other's washing. The end of steel has only reached as far as Dawson Creek, so there's still little outlet for grain and produce raised in that region and farther north,

except by the Highway itself. Under these circumstances farming is a pretty precarious proposition except for a few along the Highway, who trap in the winter and concentrate on raising food for their own use. And at the present time the fur market is so demoralized that experienced trappers have had to pull up stakes and quit, grubstakes increasing daily in price while the fur values have gone into reverse.

Frankly, I'd suggest you consider some region that has the advantages of railroad facilities and is not too far off the beaten track. Contact with the departments referred to above may give you some other ideas as to a possible location.

PROSPECTING—with prospects—in California.

I am in the Navy stationed at the naval air station at Las Alamitos, Calif. We have a couple of days a week off and also thirty days annual leave.

During some of my leave period and days off I would like very much to get out and do a little prospecting. What kind of prospecting makes very little difference if it is close enough to the base for me to be able to get there and back during a week-end.

Everett Friend
NAS Las Alamitos

Reply by Victor Shaw—About prospecting in your vicinity—there's plenty of it in semi-precious stones, some of which might be of gem quality. In fact it's one of the best gem regions in the U.S.A. I can't say the same with regard to most ore minerals—especially for a gold placer—worked by hand methods. This because such placers were sought and worked all over this region and far north as Mohave too many years *before* the 1848 gold rush. But there is some chance of finding pay veins here and there of tungsten, copper, and maybe of a silver-lead type—more rarely a quartz-gold vein.

My files have data on gem stones of the entire West Coast areas, but it would take a fair-sized book to detail them all. However, nearest to you is west of Artesia, beaches of Redondo, Hermosa and El Segundo, for agates, banded jaspers, of red and yellow, also fine moonstones. The best time to hunt them is after stormy periods.

NO MAN'S BANNER

(Continued from page 49)

That mad mood of exaltation, however, departed with the battle. He was surly that evening, even after he'd had his wine, even after Hal had rubbed him down. He snapped at Hal.

"Strike the tent. Load the beasts. We're off for London."

Manners required that he wait upon the duke with regrets and a farewell. But he was determined to see the duke alone and not expose himself to company. The duke, this night, would be a hard man to get, a busy man. In the courtyard of the castle—Sam the destroyer, and the slimmer palfrey, and Hal's own ass all saddled and loaded waiting for them—he dispatched Hal with a message. Giles himself loitered in a remote corner of the yard, in the shadows.

Immediately around him all was quiet. Elsewhere, and throughout most of the castle and grounds, all was anything but quiet. The feast would soon begin; and cooks and butchers and butlers and varlets were in a pother, running this way and that, carrying things, shouting orders. Torches spluttered and spat, caught in great iron cressets. Cartloads of fresh rushes for the hall were being brought up. Dogs prowled everywhere.

Sir Giles of No Land raised his eyes. Beyond the tower, beyond the wall, there was a spectacular moonrise in progress. Nearer, a lady stepped out on a balcony. She was all in white and shone in the moonlight, but there was nothing of the ghost about her long, dark brown hair or her lovely green eyes. She wasn't fifteen feet from Giles, but she didn't see him. She did not seem to see anything save the wilted Great Chaplet she held in her hands.

She bowed her head over it, and kissed it again and again. Tears glittered in her eyes. Chin high, then, she closed those eyes, and her lips moved, and Giles knew that she was praying.

Soon she turned and went back in.

Then Hal was before him. Hal had found the duke but the duke was very busy and couldn't Sir Giles send him a message?

"Eh?"

Hal had to repeat it. Giles nodded.

"Yes. Go tell him that I will accept the captaincy of the castle guard when he offers it to me tonight. Then unload the beasts and put the tent up again, and lay out my best bliaut. God's eyes, slowbelly! don't stand there gawping! Wouldst be late for the feast?"

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Auto Racing—WALT WOESTMAN, 2310 Midlothian Drive, Altadena, Calif.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

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Camping and Outdoor Cookery—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

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Fishing, Fresh Water—*Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

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Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

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Songs of Campfire, Foc'sle and Bunkhouse—HARRY KIRBY MCCLINTOCK, 3911 So. Pacific Ave., San Pedro, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 2, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventrue.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bld., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure.*

Horology: *The science of time and timekeepers*—JOHN W. MCGRATH, 434 W. 120th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure.*

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *History, operation, broadcast, short wave; Television*—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o *Adventure.*

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o *Adventure.*

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o *Adventure.*

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221 Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C., c/o *Adventure.*

United States Navy—FRANK HEROLD, 1647 Charon Rd., Jacksonville, Fla.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o *Adventure.*

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, c/o *Adventure.*

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The French Foreign Legion—GEORGE C. APPELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Susk., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure.*

★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 41 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, Taylor Memorial Home, 79 Lagoon St., North Narrabeen, N.S.W., Australia.

Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Naska, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, c/o *Adventure.* **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o *Adventure*

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

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★Newfoundland—CAPT. LEO C. MURPHY, J. P., Great War Veterans' Office, St. John's, Newfoundland.

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Alaska—PHILIP H. GODSELL, F. R. G. S., 531 A. 15th St., South, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

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(Continued from page 8)

comments on his story "Terror Born," in this issue. Mr. Athanas, in this rather masterful study of survival takes the fresh viewpoint that the "good" in a killer derives directly from the feral instincts that make an animal—or a man—one. Not sympathy, not even understanding in the loose sense is what he calls for—but simply insight.

I tried to write into "Terror Born" as accurate a picture of animal instinct as possible. The cougar has always fascinated me, despite its many unlovely characteristics. Perhaps this is a reaction against the way the human animal manages to clutter up his own personality and magnify and distort his own troubles with his alleged thinking processes. The wild ones work on the single uncomplicated desire to survive. They have no artifacts or superiority complexes to help or justify; they just do their best to keep alive.

I chose the cougar—mountain lion, panther, painter, devilcat—call him what you like—because the predators are almost invariably the villains of animal drama. I can't honestly consider them as villains, because they're doing just the same things the rabbits and the squirrels and the deer do. They're doing their level best to survive.

The wild ones normally are not wasteful. They kill what they eat, not because they enjoy killing, but because they are hungry. But as a boy, I remembered a time when a cougar slaughtered sheep, much as the huntress of the story. The sheepman and I wondered why—and the answer came when they tracked the killer down. The beast was literally starving. An old bullet had smashed its jaw, and it could not eat; but the goad of hunger drove it through the flock of sheep it could kill, but could not eat—which makes it a sad story to everyone but the sheepman, who tacked the hide up against a shed wall, certain of one sheepkiller less.

Which brings us back to my original premise. The sheepman killed off predators, because to feed himself and his family, he had to raise those sheep. Otherwise, he'd be out there chasing jackrabbits with the coyotes and the cougars. Was the sheepman a villain because he wanted to survive?

AT THIS point it wouldn't be remiss for both the editors and authors of *Adventure* to take a sideline seat and let one of our favorite readers carry the ball. *Adventurer* R. E. Zarbock, currently of Buenos Aires, takes the play from where our own Edgar Young dropped it back in April, and totes it ably and with energy.

However, the opinions and comments are entirely Mr. Zarbock's, and in no way re-

flect those of anyone connected with *Adventure*.

Since I am a subscriber to *Adventure* living so far from the source of supply my magazine usually reaches me about six weeks to two months after the date of issue. I have always assumed it was shipped by combination of rowboat and oxcart to take so long, but be that as it may, due to its lateness of arrival I'm afraid that what I have to say will also come a little late.

In your April issue a Mr. Thomas W. Williams of Los Angeles asked a few pertinent questions about Peru. I note that Mr. Edgar Young did a very good job of answering the questions about Mexico and Guatemala. If Mr. Williams hasn't hopped the next boat for the south I would like to add my bit to the information he received.

First I wish to state that I am an expert on Peru—the definition of an expert being "an SOB away from home." I can qualify on both counts, the first qualification by inclination alone and the second in fact.

Now let's take Mr. Williams' letter a piece at a time. First he wants to know if he can live somewhere along the coast of Peru on $75.00 a month. Somehow or other this figure keeps getting smaller instead of increasing as inflation takes hold. When I got ready to go to Peru in 1949 I had just read a magazine article stating that you could live like a king on $200.00 a month. I'll stop right here and say it can be done if you want to live like a king of the Ubangis. I never will forget how I felt the first time I traded some of my American dollars for Peruvian soles. The rate at the time was about sixteen to one and the wad of currency I got made me think the cashier had missed the decimal point on the traveler's check I was cashing.

This starts you off on the wrong foot to begin with. You treat the stuff like it was Confederate money instead of the real article. It develops into a kind of international "Monopoly" game— played for keeps. You'll pay twenty soles for a piece of junk that you wouldn't give fifty cents for at home because your pockets are so stuffed you want room to put your hands. After a while you get to the point where you treat their money with respect but it takes a little doing and is a gradual process.

Among other things I had heard that rents were cheap. I firmly believed that I would be able to rent a ten-room house, complete with swimming pool for about sixty dollars a month. I didn't really need ten rooms but I wanted a place to put all the servants I was going to hire, since they were supposed to be so cheap too. When I started house hunting I found a few very nice places for rent out in San Isidro and Miraflores, the newer residential sections of Lima, but they were all fresh out of swimming pools and they hadn't read the same magazine article that I had because they were asking anything from a hundred

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and twenty five dollars a month up. I looked around a bit and was struck with one particular little peculiarity concerning the places. Almost all of them had big beaufiful gardens, eight foot walls around the place, and a couple of great big dogs in the yard. In thinking it over I didn't imagine those walls and dogs were there to keep little children from stealing the flowers, so after due deliberation I decided to look for an apartment.

I finally found just what I wanted in the very heart of the city. The owners found what they wanted too—me!

My first shock came when I tried to park my car in the building's garage and was informed that that little service ran an extra hundred and twenty soles a month, in advance. I squawked some but I finally paid. The next thing that hit me was the electric bill and from the size of it I thought it was my Peruvian withholding tax.

The next blow was the "baja policia" which is a municipal service that handles the collection of garbage and street cleaning. When they first presented their bill I thought it was for police service and I told them I didn't want any—I'd buy a gun. When it finally became clear what it was actually for, I explained that since I lived on the seventh floor I didn't care if they swept the streets or not and that the building had an incinerator to handle my garbage needs and for my money they could disband their organization, but they were stubborn, so I paid that too.

Since Mr. Williams' $75.00 will also have to include food I will go briefly into that. The vegetables are plentiful. excellent and cheap. The only fault I have to find with them is that under no circumstances can you eat one uncooked. This rules out all green salads and like concoctions but the penalty for not following this rule or not boiling your water or milk is to risk acquiring a little pet known as the amoeba. In case you don't know what an amoeba is I can describe him as a little one-celled animal with no love life (he multiplies by division) and none of the social graces. Somebody must have slipped me a raw carrot just before I left Peru because I became well acquainted with this little pest and I'd like to say in passing he can put Carter's Little Liver Pills to shame.

Meat is a little more of a problem since most of it is imported. The prices are reasonable but the trick is to find it. Fish is plentiful—if you like to take the time and trouble to go after it.

Now let's take up the subject of Mr. Williams' hobbies, which I recall are chemistry, electricity, and swimming. If he intends to retire on $75.00 a month in Peru he won't have any money left to play around with the first two but at least he can go swimming. All up and down the coast are many excellent beaches, not particularly well developed but certainly satisfactory.

In answer to the question about insects, there aren't too many along the coast. You will find your share of flies and I saw a scorpion or two but even the rugs have fleas. I got used to that but I will say my dog never did. He was a litle narrow-minded on the subject.

Now we arrive at the final part of Mr. Williams' letter—dealing with the climate and his abnormal fear of electrical storms. In my life I have developed a couple of abnormal fears myself. One of them is flying.

I recall that my boss was a little amused at this idiosyncracy and had a little talk with me on the subject. He asked me how I planned on getting to Peru. His caustic observation was, "You'll play hell getting there on the Sunset Limited."

I got a little off the subject but I'm coming to the point. There aren't any electrical storms or for that matter any storms along the coast of Peru, but they have something to take its place. They have earthquakes.

We had a lot of good friends who had lived through the devastating one in the early part of the 1940's and I have seen them turn chalk white at the slightest tremor. There is always a possibility that in a few years Mr. Williams would trade one fear for another.

Let me say this concerning Peru. It is a wonderful land. The people are the most courteous and likable I have found. There are no great extremes of temperature—however I will say that along the coast the winters with their complete lack of sunshine are decidedly uncomfortable.

In all fairness, you can live more cheaply in Peru than you can in the States but it will not be the same kind of life you are accustomed to. I know of many Americans who have settled in Peru and intend to remain there the rest of their lives, just as there are many American families in Argentina and other parts of the world who are happy and contented with the land of their adoption but I would like to say this to Mr. Williams and any other Mr. Williamses who are contemplating leaving their homes on the strength of the Utopian literature they have read, or the half truths they have heard. Don't leave home to live abroad unless you have the money to return if you don't like it or can't adjust yourselves. The unhappiest people I know are those who have burned their bridges behind them.

We are closing this issue with a definite feeling we are burning one bridge behind us. Mr. Zarbock's Peru sounds wholly enticing. But to paraphrase Mr. Zarbock—we'd play hell getting there across just one burned bridge.

E. G. I.

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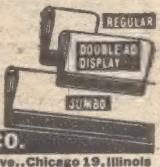

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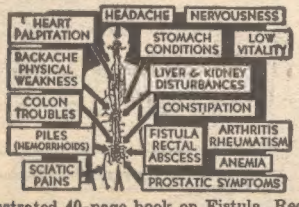

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I would like to hear from anyone who has seen my brother, Y. Bramlett, last seen in 1938. 43 years old. His mother is getting old and would like very much to see him. Please write his sister, Mrs. Delia Bramlett Bivens, 2115 Lamar Ave., Paris, Texas.

Would like to get in touch with Art Duclose. Last heard from in 1940. At that time he was living in St. Louis. Anyone knowing where he might be, please notify Wayne Lewman, Rich Hill, Mo.

McNair or McNear, Robert, was MP stationed at Stout Field Air Base, Indianapolis, Ind. in '45-46. Possibly now on father's farm in Nebraska. Write to George E. Ziegler, R. R. 2, Box 178, Spencer, Indiana.

Sister and brother-in-law of Clyde Earl Johnson would like to hear from anyone knowing his present address. He was last heard from in April of 1945. At that time he was working on the railroad at Richmond, California. He usually goes by the nickname of "Pat." Send information to Ora M. Groom, P.O. Box 257, Glasco, Kansas.

Will anyone knowing the location, past or present, of Lt. Winfield Samuels, Co. B, 503rd Parachute Regt., who was wounded on Corregidor, please communicate with Lt. Jack Herzig, c/o Beetha, 37-15 81st Street, Jackson Heights, New York.

Would like to hear from anyone knowing the present address of my brother, Frank Grizzell. He has not been heard from in ten years. His last address was Baltimore, Maryland. Please send information to John W. Grizzell, Route 1, Ben Hill, Georgia.

I would like to contact Bryant Clontz. Lost track of him before World War I. I believe he was in the Marines. Write Gordon M. Clontz, General Delivery, Canton, North Carolina.

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